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ETHNOLOGIA SLOVACA ET SLAVICA is an international peer reviewed yearbook founded in 1969 (by Ján Podolák with Piotr G. Bogatyrev, Julian Bromlej, Milovan Gavazzi, Cvetana Romanska and Christo Vakarelski) at the International Congress of Slavic Studies as an ethnological journal oriented toward Slavic countries. It is published annually in English language. At present its scope includes various social processes, mainly taking place in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The editorial strategy is to advance international and interdisciplinary discussions and to contribute to understanding social life in this region by publishing studies from the fields of ethnology and social/cultural anthropology as well as other social sciences and humanities. The main emphasis is on articles reflecting new trends and innovative approaches aimed to contribute to the development of theory and methodology. The journal brings together empirical studies of social phenomena based on ethnographic research, theoretical and methodological articles, as well as discussions on current research problems. We also give space to overviews, essays, book reviews and interviews with distinguished scholars. The individual issues are dedicated to topics notable in scholarly debates and public discourse in Slovakia and other countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The issues are prepared by the Editorial Office in accordance to the corresponding calls for papers. Some issues on particular topics are prepared by guests editors.

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EDITORIAL

Religion has been one of the most important topics of social sciences and humanities. Social scientists have mostly considered religion as integral part of social relationships and processes. In early studies religion was supposed to give way to the science and to vanish from the “rational” worldview of educated people. However, despite the great advance of science and increased level of education, today it is clear that religion still belongs to the vital aspects of human life and still influences societies in the globalized world. In explaining religious phenomena, researchers face many challenges following from the complex nature of the sphere that we call “religion”. Consequently, there are numerous methodological approaches to the study of religion that involve various theoretical concepts and emphasize different aspects of religious life of individuals and social groups. In Central Europe, attention to the study of religion has increased with the fall of communist regime that suppressed religious life. Ethnologists, anthropologists and folklorists base on empirical studies of the past and employ contemporary theoretical insights which help to understand the importance of religion and its role in society.

The present volume of *Etnologia Slovaca et Slavica* brings several empirical studies that illustrate the importance of religion in contemporary societies. Contributions to the rubric *Studies* address different forms of religious life which exist within and outside established religious systems, such as Christianity. They can be related to the ethnic identity or economy; they can contradict official doctrine and liturgy or merge it with various folk beliefs; but all of them are vital for understanding people’s worldview and behaviour. Ján Botik examines importance of confessionalism in the context of Slovak enclaves in Central and South-Eastern Europe and argues that it was one of the two main factors in the migratory movements of Slovak emigrants to these areas. While many previous studies consider enclaves mainly in relation to the core national community and pay attention to the economy, his research has demonstrated that the economic and religious motives for migration were equally important and raised the ethnic and social self-confidence of the population concerned. Magdalena Elchinova explores another group with Slavic identity

living outside their maternal country – the Bulgarian diaspora in Canada and the U.S. Northeast and Midwest. She discusses the role of the church in immigrants' lives in relation to the concept of the ethnic church and focuses on its role in immigrants' life trajectories. Manca Račič addresses different topic – the place of religious minority in a legal system and its influence on believers' religious identity. She presents results of ethnographic research conducted in the environment of informally established groups and individuals who consider themselves as followers of the so-called Native Faith in Slovenia and examines the influence of the legislation and the state on their experience as members of a minority religious community, and the tensions that arise from interaction with the majority Catholic community.

The rubric *Research Reports* brings Nadia Clemente's description of a Slavic enclave living in the Resia Valley in Italy which speaks a Slavic language with archaic elements. She presents an interesting material recorded by scholars and travellers and connect it to the Resian oral tradition and religious customs. In his article in the rubric *Essays*, Michal Uhrin reflects on an important methodological problem – the question of objectivity and subjectivity of anthropological research, in particular regarding empirical study of religious beliefs and practices. Two contributions to the rubric *Personalities* are also linked to the empirical research on supernatural beliefs, albeit in different context of folk tradition. Hana Hlôšková presents the overviews of life and works of Ján Michálek, a prominent scholar who played an essential role in the development of folkloristics in Slovakia and significantly contributed to the study of folk tales. Tatiana Bužeková's interview with Mirjam Mencej, one of the most distinguished scholars researching contemporary folk beliefs, addresses her work in relation to witchcraft beliefs, vernacular religion, corresponding theoretical and methodological issues, empirical research, and her teaching practice. The reviews of several books that were recently published in Slovakia and reports on significant events in the ethnological community conclude the present volume.

We believe that this issue will give readers a sense of colourful mosaic consisting of ethnographic research on religion in different countries and different socio-political contexts. We also hope that the presented volume will contribute to the empirical study of religion in Central Europe and in the globalized world.

Tatiana Bužeková

THE IMPORTANCE OF CONFESSIONALISM IN THE LIFE OF SLOVAK ENCLAVES IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

JÁN BOTÍK

Abstract: In migration and minority studies from the end of the 19th century to the present, the dominant research discourse is ethnocentrism resp. methodological nationalism. It was therefore natural that in the study of sub-ethnic communities, such as enclaves or minorities, in the social sciences, research concepts are derived from ethnic categories and enclaves or ethnic minorities are analysed primarily in relation to the “parent”, i.e. the core of national community. At present, critical opinions are increasingly being expressed about such approaches. And they point out, among other things, that the research of enclaves or ethnic minorities has long marginalized the equally important principle of identification, which is their practised religiosity and confessional identity. In the case of Slovak enclaves in Central and South-Eastern Europe, the consideration of confessionalism is even more important, as it was one of the two main factors in the migratory movements of Slovak emigrants to these European areas. The economic and religious motives for migration were equal and raised the ethnic and social self-confidence of the population concerned.

Key words: enclave, ethnicity, confessionalism, Lutheranism, group identity

Following the defeat of the Ottoman Empire by the Habsburg Monarchy and peace treaties signed in Sremski Karlovci in 1699 and in Požarevac in 1718, Slovaks emigrated to the Pannonian Plain in the southern parts of the Kingdom of Hungary. This opened up the possibility for the settlement of vast areas that had been largely depopulated and devastated as a result of Turkish plundering. Over the 18th and 19th centuries, over 40,000 families and approximately 200,000 Slovaks emigrated to this area and settled there in two dozen ethnic “islands” (Sirácky, 1966, p. 9). The highest density was in the area between the Danube and the Tisza rivers on the borders of present-day Hungary, Romania, Serbia, and Croatia. At the end of the 19th century, a small group moved

from that area to the Danube Plain in Bulgaria (Michalko, 1936, p. 27; Kmet', 2012, p. 19).

It was assumed that the emigration of Slovaks to southern Hungary was motivated by economic and religious reasons, which turned out to be two crucial and equally important factors (Kowalská, 2011, p. 46). Surprisingly, however, previous research on the consequences of this emigration and settlement process has focused almost exclusively on ethnic aspects. Research concepts have aimed to explain the development of these enclaves from the point of view of nationalism, especially in relation to the national community which the emigrants separated from. In this situation, people paid little attention to other phenomena that were no less important, such as religiousness and confessional identity. In the case of these Slovak enclaves, it is important to take confessionalism into account because it was one of the main reasons for emigration.

Emigrants from all over Slovakia took part in the emigration to the southern parts of Hungary. They formed two main confessional groups: Roman Catholics and Evangelical Lutherans. It is estimated that more than two-thirds of these emigrants were members of the Evangelical Church who were born in the southern regions of central Slovakia (Štolc, 1971, p. 33; Divičanová, 1996, p. 9; Sklabinská, & Mosnáková, 2013, p. 8). It is reasonable to ask what caused the Evangelicals from central Slovakia in particular to be so highly represented among these emigrants.

During the main flow of Slovak emigrants to the Pannonian region in the 17th century, the number of Roman Catholics in Slovakia sharply decreased as a result of the Protestant Reformation initiated by Martin Luther. The Catholic clergy refused to accept this, and so they embarked on the Counter-Reformation and radical and violent re-Catholicization. The region affected most by Counter-Reformation efforts was central Slovakia, where Protestantism had spread from the Germans living in the mining towns and royal cities. For this reason, the Esztergom Chapter sent a large group of Jesuits to Bzovík Castle in 1618 with the aim to return the “reformed” citizens back to the teachings of the Catholic Church. The following is a testimony about the Jesuits’ re-Catholicization practices:

The Jesuits eagerly worked on eradicating Protestants. They used force, threats, beatings, and all sorts of promises on the masses to drive them away. They accomplished what they intended to do to such a degree that there is now hardly a single Protestant left. An old man named Pavel Sedmák, who was committed to his beloved and pure Gospel of Christ and who refused to renounce it to avoid being converted to the ‘self-redemptive’ Roman Catholic Church, was dragged half-dead out of his own house under an order issued by a local citizen. He was thrown under the gallows, where the greatest criminals were killed by an executioner, and this poor man was killed without his children or friends present. Then he was disgracefully buried. At

that time, under penalty of a fine of forty gold coins, the local Evangelicals were forced to convert to Catholicism. Those who refused to do so were put into the dungeons, beaten with whips and clubs, and forced to attend Mass under the threat of violence. As a result of this cruel treatment, many decided to leave in order to be able to remain faithful to the Gospel of Christ (Schmidt, 1868, p. 259).

The landowners, who needed to hire settlers to work on their estates, responded favourably to the religious motives for emigration. They included a clause in the settlement agreements expressing their willingness to comply with the settlers' "requests to serve the Lord and be guaranteed freedom of religion according to their convictions" (Žilinský, 1872, p. 21). With this guaranteed, the emigrants' determination to persevere in their religious convictions was not the only thing they carried with them to their new settlements. The modest belongings they carried included religious books that were central to their spiritual life and worship, especially the Bible and the *Cithara Sanctorum* hymn book (also called *Tranoscius*) which contained a collection of religious songs. In addition, larger groups of emigrants were often accompanied by an ordained priest or a teacher who could perform religious services. It was not uncommon for priests to join the settlement process as "impopulators" – people who were authorized to provide landowners with the settlers they needed (Kukučka, 2018, p. 176).

The settlement of the Pannonian Plain was a long process. The settlers first had to establish their villages and prepare the land in order for it to provide for them. As the soil was uncultivated, overgrown with thorns, and prone to flooding, it took them a lot of time and effort until crops could be produced (Mráz, 1948, p. 36). In his monograph on Békéscsaba, L. Haan wrote that even in such a challenging situation, "the first concern of the members of a new settlement was to organize themselves as a church" (Haan, 1866, p. 14).

But what did "organizing oneself as a church" mean under the circumstances? The primary role of the new settlements was to elect some respected and trustworthy leaders as "presbyters". The priest, along with the teacher, the presbyters, and other members of the religious community, formed a self-governing unit or "congregation". The role of congregations was to create an infrastructure that would suit religious and ecclesiastical needs such as the church, parsonage, bell tower, cemetery, and school. Dwellings and religious buildings helped settlers put down roots and settle into their new environment. They constructed these buildings together in order to satisfy their religious and educational needs, unite the churchmen, and strengthen their spiritual and residential sense of belonging. These buildings were the result of their collective efforts, and the memories of their endeavours awakened the newcomers' emotional ties to the settled and sacred territory, legitimizing in turn their claim to this new homeland. This legitimacy was crucial, because without it they would have remained somewhat homeless.

With the arrival of Slovak and German Evangelicals, a religious and cultural phenomenon that had been unknown in that area up to that point became established in the Pannonian region. Lutheranism allowed creative thinking and scientific knowledge to permeate church life. Moreover, it brought the principles of autonomy and democracy into church life and through that into communal life. The innovation of making the language of religious services and religious books understandable to the churchgoers is considered the most significant result of Martin Luther's Reformation, both in terms of the humanities and cultural progressiveness. The Bible translated into different languages became "a mirror in which the nations saw themselves". It was also the most significant means for what is usually referred to as "cultural nationalism" (Collinson, 2004, pp. 37, 49).

The members of the Slovak Protestant enclaves remained strong in their Lutheran faith. Whenever the number of settlers in a place reached at least a hundred families, a separate congregation was formed. In the organizational structure of these congregations, the presbytery constituted the most crucial element of their autonomous and democratizing role. This consisted of elected representatives of the local church community, including several dozen elderly, wealthy, literate, respected, and energetic members. Together with local priests and teachers, the presbyters represented the dominant stratum of the elite in their respective religious community. As a result, they had a decisive influence on the standards of religious and ecclesiastical life as well as on communal and cultural life in their respective communities.

Slovak settlers also brought to their enclaves an ardent Evangelical piety which they relied on during religious activities as well as in times of family suffering or when in various states of contemplation. The following testimony originated in a Slovak enclave in Vojvodina:

Everything the Lord does is good is not only the first verse of a popular religious song. For the descendants of Slovak Evangelical emigrants, it means so much more. It is the life credo their distant ancestors left them with. It has been more than 250 years since the first Slovak settlers consoled each other with this song when the time came for them to leave their land and start building a new home in this region. Their first steps in the new land, the process of bread making in the new home of the breadwinner, and the creation of settlements in a foreign world all brought their fair share of troubles. It was necessary to overcome homesickness and the longing for those left behind. Above all, it was necessary to learn how to cope with the new environment and to accept it as part of God's will. *His will is holy*, as our ancestors sang in a hymn (Myjavcová, 2004, p. 71).

The 1636 *Cithara Sanctorum* hymn book by Jiří Tranovský, also known as *Tranoscius*, was a songbook used in places of worship and a prayer book for everyday life and special occasions. It contained prayers for the morning and

evening; days of the week; protection against storms, plagues and other diseases, rising prices, and warfare; and help in times of trouble and various other occasions. This hymn book was in every family's home and was often owned by every adult. It played an important role in the Evangelical settlers' spiritual life and in the way they saw themselves. Indeed, this hymn book can be described as their cultural code (Tušková, 2011, p. 252).

The researchers of these Protestant enclaves agree that religion played a crucial role in the settlers' lives. It was a factor behind the formation of individual groups and their identities, and it served as an organizational principle that affected the practical sphere of life in various ways (Jakoubek, 2010, p. 74). The Evangelical Church had an impact on settlers' entire lives from their arrival. This was possible due to the fact that it managed the most important aspects of spiritual and communal life as well as the most important milestones and events in the lives of individuals, such as birth, confirmation, marriage, and death. It had a significant impact on marriage and family, moral conduct, education, training, way of thinking, customs and traditions, and commercial and business activities. All this made it clear that the Evangelical Church shaped the mentality, culture, and identity of the people living in the Slovak enclaves in a particular way (Berédi, 1995, p. 8). It is therefore no coincidence that these Slovak settlers answered "I am an Evangelist" instead of "I am Slovak" when asked how they identified themselves by the historian Jozef Maliak, who carried out research in Vojvodina. From these answers, he drew the conclusion that their sense of faith was stronger than their sense of nationality (Maliak, 1923, p. 50).

The many roles played by the Evangelical Church led to confessionalism taking the dominant position in the group identification of these emigrants. Until the beginning of the 20th century, it shaped their collective distinctiveness. However, it was not the only identity-forming factor. The idea about the identity of a certain individual or a broader group was formed by several components of a complex identity which included confessional identity and local, ethnic, cultural, and other identities. The individual components of this complex identity "are bound by mutual relationships of varying intensity and quality. Sometimes they simply co-exist when they do not influence each other in any way. However, there are also cases where such identities are mutually determined, blended, interchanged, and considered identical. Religious and ethnic identities tend to blend in ethnically and religiously homogeneous communities, where all Slovaks are Evangelicals and all Evangelicals are Slovaks, whereas other ethnic groups are of a different religion" (Lenovský, 2017, p. 56). This situation is characteristic of the majority of Slovak enclaves. Since in their complex identity their "Slovak identity" also overlaps with their Evangelical one, Miroslav Kmet' reached the conclusion that these enclaves could be seen as an ethno-confessional phenomenon (Kmet', 2010, p. 204).

Among the ethnic attributes in the ecclesiastical and religious life of the Slovak enclaves, the mother tongue proved to be of crucial importance. As a result, the Evangelical Church played a central role in these enclaves in terms of integration and ethnic awareness and contributed – through priests and teachers from the Slovak homeland – to maintaining contact with the mother nation (Myjavcová, 1996, p. 24).

The circumstances of the historical and cultural development of Slovaks showed that the language of the Bible of Kralice from the end of the 16th century – also known as Biblical Czech – became the language of worship and written correspondence of Slovak Evangelicals. Emigration and the detachment of Slovak enclaves from events happening in the mother nation meant that Biblical Czech continued to prevail in the enclaves for much longer than in Slovakia itself. This is why it is perfectly justified to inquire about the reason as to why Biblical Czech, as well as religious ceremonies and various documents in this language, was one of the most important factors and determining features of confessional and ethnic (i.e., Slovak) identity for the enclave communities up until the beginning of the 20th century. Several facts contributed to this. First of all, until the codification of the Slovak language by Ľudovít Štúr in 1844, biblical language had been used in churches and educational environment for many generations. People used this language to preach, sing, pray, and write various manuscripts and texts. The language used in the Bible and in *Tranoscius*, with its antique and spiritual nature, was extraordinary and uplifting. As such, it was used by common people in speeches and ceremonial acts at weddings and funerals, on tombstones, in family chronicles, and even in economic writing. The poet and publicist Paľo Bohuš noticed that the biblical language used in *Tranoscius* and the Bible of Kralice started to resemble Slovak in the enclaves both in oral and written form. This was the case lexically, grammatically, and in terms of pronunciation. The language became softer and more similar to Slovak dialects (Bohuš, 1995, p. 359). The Evangelical priests Ján Stehlo and Samuel Borovský described the language of the Bible of Kralice and *Tranoscius* as “Biblical Slovak” (Dudok, 1997, p. 45).

By separating from their original community and integrating themselves into a foreign society that was different from their own in terms of language and religion, Slovak enclaves found themselves in a new and significantly different situation. As a result, they experienced various peculiarities in their development. The degree of these peculiarities varied according to the extent to which continuous and discontinuous trends contributed to their development in terms of how the relationship between persistence and change, tradition and innovation, acceptance and rejection, and resistance and conformity was represented (Lipták, 2000, p. 14).

In the development of Slovak enclaves, where confessionalism held a dominant position for a long time, continuous trends prevailed until the turn of the

19th and 20th centuries. The continuous persistence of the religious, linguistic, and cultural features of these enclaves was a result of conservatism that was typical of the confessional communities. One characteristic trait of these groups was the creation of defence mechanisms against merger with the surrounding society. Perhaps the most common of these mechanisms was the principle of group endogamy (the practice of marrying within a specific religious or ethno-confessional group) (Uherek, & Beranská, 2011, p. 12). Endogamy was used to maintain confessional reproduction as well as the reproduction of linguistic and ethno-cultural practices that the enclave communities had brought with them from their homeland.

Many priests and teachers served in the Evangelical Church in Slovak enclaves. In addition to their pastoral and educational endeavours, they also devoted their time to literary and research activities. These resulted in relatively extensive poetic, prosaic, journalistic, patriotic, historiographical, linguistic, ethnographic, natural scientific, agricultural, and other specialized works (Ormis, 1935; Mráz, 1948; Jančovic, 2009; Kmeť, 2010). This work was a testament to the various activities pursued by these scholars. It also significantly contributed to the preservation of the historical and cultural memory of the respective enclaves. It represents a valuable source of introspection. It was a substantial testimony on the specific features of their collective identity and their persistence as a minority, contributing to enclave self-awareness and the profiling of group identity. This work with thematic content and cognitive benefits went beyond the enclaves themselves and became an organic part of Slovak cultural values.

The dominance of confessional identity in the environment of Slovak enclaves began to decline to a more considerable extent at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. This decline happened as a result of the nationalist movements focusing on the epicentre of national life in the spirit of Romanticism and Herder's idea of the "national spirit". It was also due to the dissolution of Austria-Hungary and the creation of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1918. Even in the enclaves, these events contributed to an emphasis being placed on the principles of national identity and the formation of patriotic feelings towards these settlers' country of origin. With the development of national consciousness, the previous dominance of confessionalism and confessional identity started to wane. From this perspective, it was only a matter of time until the discourse on methodological nationalism would begin to be developed in migration and minority studies.



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**THE ETHNIC CHURCH AND ITS ROLE
IN THE SHAPING OF AN IMMIGRANT
COMMUNITY:
ST. JOHN OF RILA BULGARIAN ORTHODOX
CHURCH IN CHICAGO**

MAGDALENA ELCHINOVA

Abstract: The big industrial cities in Canada and the U.S. Northeast and Midwest became the home of many Bulgarians already by the beginning of the twentieth century. The fall of communism ignited new waves of migration across the Atlantic. Today Chicago, Illinois is reported to be the host of the largest Bulgarian diaspora. The diaspora has its “ethnic” spaces on the host city map: churches, clubs, restaurants, etc. This paper presents a case study focused on *St. John of Rila* Bulgarian Orthodox church in Chicago. It discusses the role of the church in immigrants’ lives, as well as in the formation of a Bulgarian migrant community on American soil. The discussion is based on the concept of the *ethnic church*, designating the particular function which places of worship of different denominations play in the lives of first-generation immigrants in the U.S. The various functions of the church are described and analysed: as a place of worship, of religious and secular celebrations, of weekly community gatherings, as well as a place where newcomers look for vital information and support. The focus is on how immigrants view the church as a significant site on their personal life trajectories.

Key words: *St. John of Rila*, Chicago, migration, ethnic church

Introduction

Based on anthropological research conducted among Bulgarians living in Chicago, Illinois, this article discusses the making and sustaining of an immigrant community in the United States, with particular regard to the role of the

ethnic church in these processes. The church is regarded here as a congregation, that is a local, face-to-face religious assembly, initiating particular (ethnically oriented) activities and developing an institution of, by, and for itself (Warner, 1993). Stephen Warner defines the congregation as “a local *voluntary religious association*, usually culturally homogenous and often legally constituted as a non-profit corporation controlled by its laity and administered by professional clergy” (Warner, 1998, p. 21). The term ethnic church, which is central to the present discussion, refers to the oftentimes ethnic or cultural homogeneity of religious congregations formed in immigration. This term does not characterize a specific religious denomination but rather describes the characteristic traits of various immigrant religious institutions under certain circumstances. The functions of the ethnic churches are particularly visible and well-studied in the context of U.S. society, conspicuous for its exceptional religious diversity. In the American context, the church understood loosely as the center of religious and social life of various local bodies, representing a huge variety of religious denominations, plays a crucial role in the process of migrants’ adaptation into the receiving society, paradoxically, by sustaining their ethnic specificity. However, this is a transient feature as far as congregations are of shifting significance for the migrants of different generations. Hence, immigrant congregations may gradually lose their ethnic character in order to meet the needs and expectations of the second, third, etc. generations (see for examples Warner & Wittner, 1998).

My observations are focused mostly on first-generation migrants from Bulgaria in Chicago and on the *St. John of Rila* Bulgarian Orthodox Church in the city, which still operates as an ethnic church. The following discussion seeks to highlight the functions of the ethnic church in immigration, some of which have little to no relation with religious faith and practice. Moreover, it seeks to reveal how the religious gatherings of the members of a particular Bulgarian Orthodox Christian congregation nurture the formation of an immigrant community and catalyze processes of differentiation within it.

Quite untypically for an anthropological work, this study seeks to trace the transformations of the *St. John of Rila* congregation within a relatively long span of time – from 2006 onwards. The fieldwork methods applied vary a lot throughout the period. The bulk of my fieldwork among Bulgarian immigrants in Chicago took place between February and July 2006 as a fully-fledged participant observation. In my frequent visits to the church and in my contacts with Bulgarian immigrants at that time, I was equally driven by my scholarly intentions and my needs as a person living away from home in an unfamiliar place. Although I always expressed my position as a researcher, more often than not my interlocutors regarded me as one of them – a newcomer from Bulgaria, trying to find her way in the U.S., and were willing to help me and share their experiences with me. Thus, I acquired a vast amount of information through my direct involvement in numerous informal talks, family gatherings

and public events, ceremonies and celebrations. In addition, I used online and printed sources, including the church website and bulletin (St. John of Rila Church, 2021), as well as the Bulgarian-language newspapers published in Chicago. In addition to my systematic field notes, video and photo documentation, I made seven in-depth interviews with members of the *St. John of Rila* congregation (three of them with multiple interlocutors). The two priests at *St. John of Rila* at the time, a teacher at the Sunday school, regular members of the congregation, as well as a person who had left the congregation were among my interviewees. Those exhaustive on-site observations allowed me to achieve a thick description (Geertz, 1973, pp. 3-30) of the Bulgarian immigrants' life in Chicago and to see processes and trends hidden below the surface level. My subsequent observations were not that systematic. I continued my research mainly through examining online sources concerning the *St. George of Rila* congregation and the Bulgarians in Chicago. The current discussion is also informed by recent anthropological and folkloristic research, conducted among Bulgarians in the U.S., including Chicago (for example, Vukov & Borisova, 2017; Mihaylova, 2017; Ivanova, 2017; Pirgova, 2017). Albeit based on different research methods, some of these publications provide valuable information about the religious organization and practice of the Bulgarians overseas. The increasing number of publications on Bulgarian immigrant communities across Europe and their religious life form a comparative framework against which the case of *St. John of Rila* in Chicago can be studied more thoroughly.

An important aspect of this article is that it deals with the role of the church in community formation under the condition of transnational migration. This brings forward such issues as: the transformation of Bulgarian Orthodox Christians' life under the impact of the specific context of U.S. society, the "adoption" of particular religious organizational strategies from other denominations in multicultural Chicago, the increased significance of the church and religion in immigration, etc. The size of this article does not allow for an elaborate analysis of the transnational condition, nor of the relevant terminology. Here, I use migration related terms as defined in the Glossary on Migration (2019).

The term "ethnic" appears below mostly as part of the concept of the ethnic church and refers to the tendency of ethnic/cultural homogeneity in the congregation in focus. I will not delve into the complex and complicated debate on ethnic groups and identities but will elaborate a little bit on how the members of the *St. John of Rila* congregation perceive and speak of their ethnic (i.e., Bulgarian) roots. On the one hand, they speak of the churches in ethnic terms (e.g., Bulgarian/ Serbian/ Greek/ Polish etc. churches in Chicago). On the other hand, despite the ecumenical mission of Orthodox Christianity, they consider their faith as their cultural property – hence, the correlation between religion and other cultural (specifically Bulgarian) traits, as well as the numerous non-religious functions of the ethnic church. My interlocutors perceive their congrega-

tion in terms of an ethnic community and articulate their identity very much in line with the ethno-symbolic conceptions: in addition to their common name (Bulgarians), they have a common homeland and ancestry, share the same historical fate, the same culture (language, religion, folklore, cuisine, etc.), as well as a sense of solidarity toward their fellow countrymen (cf. Smith, 1983).

It is worth specifying that I use the term “community” here in order to emphasize the high degree of commonality and connectedness (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000, pp. 19-20) that many members of the *St. John of Rila* congregation perceive to share with each other. This is not to say, however, that this community is static and unified. On the contrary, as will be shown below, under the surface level it is quite diverse, fluid, and full of contradictions: “old” vs “new” immigrants, older vs younger generations, qualified vs unqualified workers, “elite” vs “ordinary” members.

In building up my argument about the role of the ethnic church in the formation of an immigrant community, I will, first of all, present a brief description of the Bulgarian immigrants in the U.S. I will then describe the Bulgarian Orthodox Church St. John of Rilla in Chicago, including the structure and activities of its congregation. In the following section, I will give a closer look into the functions of the church in immigrants' lives, discussing its ethnic character. Furthermore, I will discuss the stratification of the ethnic congregation, delineating possible perspectives of transformation of the ethnic church.

The Bulgarian Immigrants in the United States

There were three major waves of Bulgarian immigration to the U.S. (cf. Altankov, 1979; Bodnar, 1977; Carlson & Allen, 1990; Prpić, 1978; Karamihova, 2004; Stoianova-Boneva, 1991; Balikci & Stoianova-Boneva, 1993; Traikov, 1993; Migration Movements, 1993; Vassileva, 1999; Stoilkova, 2001). The early immigration from the end of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century consisted of economic migrants of rural background, who arrived in the big industrial centers of North America with the mindset to earn money and return home. Eventually, many of them settled down and brought their families overseas thus laying the groundwork for the beginning of a new immigrant community. Their successors are now fully incorporated into the host society.

The political immigrants from the communist era formed the second wave that was relatively small in scale. Those were people of different social background, who defected from Bulgaria because of being discontented with or persecuted by the communist regime. Their children and grandchildren have by now also become insiders in the country of immigration.

The last big wave is the post-1990 immigration. It forms the most numerous and diverse cohort of Bulgarian-born immigrants who left their home country for the U.S. after the fall of state socialism. They were driven mostly by economic reasons and left their home country in search of better life. This group continues to expand and is therefore still dominated by first-generation immigrants. Immigration from Bulgaria to the United States still continues but at a low pace and includes migrants of socially diverse backgrounds – students, highly qualified professionals, as well as unskilled workers.

The post-1990 immigrants are the subject of my study, as they form the majority in both the observed congregation, and in my interviewees. In order to distinguish them from the migrants of the earlier waves, I will call them Bulgarian immigrants, whereas I will use the term “Bulgarian-Americans” to refer to those who came with the first and second waves, as well as their offspring. This terminological distinction is in fact in use among the earlier immigrants (Stoianova-Boneva, 1991). When speaking of “the Bulgarian immigrants in the United States”, I do not overlook their inner diversity (see also Pirgova, 2017). On the contrary, my aim is to delineate and discuss particularly the inner differentiation among the Bulgarians in the U.S.A. – one that goes beyond the three cohorts of immigrants outlined above.

Bulgarian immigrants are more often than not Green Card holders, arriving in the U.S. with the idea of staying.¹ In some cases, the entire family leaves for the U.S., in others, one family member goes first, and the rest join later. These people send money to their relatives back home, but they also invest in the host country (pay rent, tuition fees, federal and state taxes, buy homes, cars, furniture, go on holidays, etc.). Most of them (if not all) apply for American citizenship after the required period of stay in the U.S. The successful applicants usually keep their Bulgarian citizenship as well.

Allegedly, today Chicago hosts the biggest Bulgarian community abroad. It owes this particular status above all to the post-1990 immigrants. The steady increase in the number of Bulgarian nationals there has led to the opening of a General Consulate of the Republic of Bulgaria in Chicago in 2004 which serves the needs of the ever-increasing Bulgarian diaspora in the Midwestern United States. There are no official statistics about the number of Bulgarian immigrants in the city. In 2006, the estimates varied between 70 and 100 thousand people, with an additional 20 to 50 thousand unregistered migrants. As of today, the estimated number is already above 150-200 thousand people (Ivanova, 2017, p. 285). The internal mobility between Chicago and other U.S. cities also influences the fluctuation of this number, alongside transnational migration.

¹ Referring to statistics publicized by the U.S. State Department, M. Karamihova (2004, p. 275) claims that between 1999 and 2002 Bulgaria has been the third sending country in the Green Card Lottery Program.

The number of men and women among Bulgarian immigrants is proportionate. The size of the community in Chicago and the intensity of chain migration sustains in-group marriages. Marriage patterns among these immigrants are still to be studied but there is evidence that the second-generation migrants are more likely to find spouses outside the Bulgarian immigrant community in comparison to the first generation (see also Karamihova, 2004, pp. 109-153).² In socio-biological terms, the Bulgarian immigrants in Chicago consist of people from three generations. However, in terms of migration generations, there are representatives of two generations among them.³

As it has been said above, the Bulgarians in the Windy City do not form a uniform community. In addition to the differentiation between “old” and “new” immigrants, there are two more distinctive categories with regard to immigrants’ education and professional qualification. The majority of post-1990 immigrants are people, who graduated from high school or professional schools, or have university diplomas, but who have poor to no command of English. Because of their limited English language skills, they have access only to unqualified jobs. A considerable number of my interlocutors in 2006 provided cleaning services or were household assistants; many men worked as truck drivers or in construction, others were factory workers or self-employed. Recent studies reveal that the occupational opportunities for first-generation immigrants have not changed much (Vukov & Borisova, 2017). Better command of English guarantees better job opportunities, e.g. teachers, travel and real estate agents, etc. Those migrants, who have improved their language proficiency, enjoy upward social mobility, thus contributing to the further differentiation within the immigrant community.

The highly qualified professionals with good command of English among the Bulgarian immigrants are a small group. Many of them arrived in the U.S. upon invitation by an American university or other institution and work on a contract (usually in the sciences). There are also doctors, dentists, lawyers, nurses, who have acquired American certificates and are able to practice their profession in the host society. Those who run their own small business are usually involved in construction, advertising, travel and tourist services, and real estate services.

Even though this kind of stratification among Bulgarian immigrants still exists, their level of education and professional skills have risen on average during the last 15 years. This holds particularly true for the second-generation

² For comparison, intermarriages were more common for the political immigrants, due to the fact that they were predominantly male (Stoianova-Boneva, 1991, p. 81).

³ Quite often, Bulgarian immigrants with young children invite their parents to the United States, in order to look after their grandchildren. Thus, both parents are able to go to work and to save from babysitting. Sometimes the grandparents stay in America for only a few years, sometimes they stay for good.

immigrants, who were either born in the U.S. or arrived there in their early childhood. Educated in the American schooling system, they have good command of English and many of them go to college and find good jobs afterwards. Thus, the generational division among Bulgarian immigrants in Chicago is gradually shifting into a socio-economic one, further contributing to the inner transformation of the immigrant community. The bigger entrepreneurs and employers, such as truck company and construction company owners are at the top of the economic hierarchy of the Bulgarian community in Chicago.

The categories outlined above are by far diverse in themselves; however, there is a good reason to group them so, as far as people belonging to them differentiate between each other. The most salient differences between them are to be seen in their socialization projects – the majority of unqualified workers tend to socialize predominantly within the immigrant community, whereas the qualified professionals strive to socialize with wider American society. Curiously, some people see socializing in the immigrant community as an obstacle for successful socialization with greater society. I have heard quite a few stories about fellow countrymen who ridicule or try to discourage immigrants who are diligent in improving their English or in obtaining better professional skills. No wonder that most of the highly qualified migrants I met have been estranged from the Bulgarian congregations in Chicago and preferred to go to other Orthodox churches (Greek, Serbian, or Russian). A conclusion can be drawn that English proficiency and education/ qualification are the most important social stratification factors among the Bulgarian immigrants in Chicago that have led to the formation of two distinctive albeit disproportionate in size socio-economic categories of immigrants. The boundaries between these categories are often rigid but, in the long run, fluid.

The socio-economic differentiation among the Bulgarian immigrants in Chicago intersects with the one between “old” and “new” immigrants. On the whole, the Bulgarian-Americans are better off in comparison to the Bulgarian immigrants, as well as better integrated in U.S. society. In addition to the differences in their socio-economic status, there are often cultural collisions between the representatives of the two groups that could be explained with their quite different experiences in both Bulgaria and U.S.A.

Seen from the outside, the Bulgarian immigrant community looks relatively small, dispersed, and not as self-sufficient as some of the bigger communities in the ethnic landscape of Chicago appear to be.⁴ There are a few neigh-

⁴ For instance, the Polish community in Chicago (see for details Erdmans, 1998), which is among the largest in size, offers possibilities for many of its members to spend most of their time among ethnic “kin” – in the store, at the hairdressers’, at the doctors’ or dentists’, at school, and even at work. Communication often goes in Polish that is why young Poles, including American-born, speak Polish fluently, unlike Bulgarian children who speak in English outside the family circle and are not fluent in their mother tongue.

borhoods with higher concentration of Bulgarians (Ivanova 2017, 286), but the tendency is to buy apartments in affordable, yet gentrified parts of Chicago or the city suburbs, rather than to cluster in ethnic enclaves. Nevertheless, the Bulgarian immigrants have their ethnic sites – churches, cultural centers, Sunday schools, restaurants, cafes, and grocery stores. These ethnic sites have multiplied over the years, contributing to the growing visibility of the Bulgarians in the urban landscape (Vukov & Borisova, 2017, pp. 31-32). There are also Bulgarian-language newspapers, TV channels, and online media based in Chicago (see for details Ivanova, 2017, p. 287), as well as several dance groups and a theatrical troupe that contribute to the salience of the Bulgarian community in Chicago.

St. John of Rila Bulgarian Orthodox Church in Chicago

There are four Bulgarian churches on the territory of Chicago and its suburbs: two Orthodox and two evangelical⁵. St. Sophia Bulgarian Orthodox Church was established in 1947. It belongs to the Bulgarian Eastern Orthodox Diocese of U.S.A., Canada and Australia at the Holy Synod in Sofia. In 2005, it moved to a new building in Des Plaines, Illinois, one of the suburbs preferred by Bulgarian immigrants. *St. John of Rila* church was established in 1995. It is under the umbrella of the Bulgarian Diocese at the Orthodox Church in America (OCA).⁶ When *St. John of Rila* was founded, it had a small congregation. The church was located on rented premises in the city – at first in a kindergarten, and later in a small chapel. Since 1999, the church has a home of its own – the old building of a former German Lutheran church in North-western Chicago. The property consists of two semi-detached buildings, hosting the church, the Bulgarian-language school at the church, offices and living premises. The very foundation of the church and its subsequent enlargement testify to the rapidly growing number of Bulgarian immigrants in the city during the 1990s.

Inside, the church looks somewhat different from the typical Orthodox churches in Bulgaria. There are rows of benches which are usually absent at the Orthodox churches in Bulgaria, the places for candles are differently arranged, and, most importantly, the altar is oriented to the west instead of the

⁵ More about the religious institutions of the Bulgarian émigré communities in the U.S.A. see in Altankov, 1979, pp. 98-107; Gardev, 1992; Karamihova, 2004, pp. 76-80; Stoianova-Boneva, 1991, pp. 53-54; Mihaylova, 2017, pp. 242-243.

⁶ OCA was established in 1794 as a mission of the Russian Orthodox Church in Alaska. In 1970 it was declared autocephalous by the Patriarch in Moscow. Currently, it has 15 dioceses, some of them defined along ethnic lines. More about OCA see in Karamihova, 2004, p. 78; Mihaylova, 2017, pp. 243-244; History & Archives, 2001.

east as it should be according to the Orthodox canon. Its richly decorated iconostasis is made by an artist of Bulgarian origin, and the icons are donated by other artists or by members of the congregation. There are two more premises in the basement. The big hall serves as a dining room with a small kitchen. This is where the congregation gathers after the Sunday mass, as well as during the regularly organized evening celebrations, concerts, and dinner dances. There is a small podium in the hall, where plays, concerts, dances, and recitals are performed on particular occasions. A smaller hall is organized as a bar, where smokers gather to drink coffee, refreshments, and even alcohol. The small corridor, connecting the two halls, is used as an information center: there one can find Bulgarian-language newspapers, as well as various announcements and advertisements (about forthcoming events, apartments and houses for rent or sale, job vacancies). People from the community advertise their businesses there. Photographs of important events, celebrations, or visits of U.S. and Bulgarian officials to the church are exhibited in the hallway, too. Certificates confirming the legalization of the church and the Bulgarian-language school, as well as official addresses and honorary diplomas are also displayed there. The next-door building hosts classrooms, the priest's office, as well as an apartment for the priest. There is also a small courtyard, where the barbecue for the church picnics is prepared. In 2015, a bust-monument to the Bulgarian national hero Vasil Levski was unveiled in the courtyard. It became a place of veneration during Bulgarian national holidays and other commemorative occasions (Vukov & Borisova, 2017, p. 24).

The priests at the church are appointed by the head of the Bulgarian Diocese at OCA. Until now, all of them have been of Bulgarian origin.⁷ The financial and property matters of the church are run by a 12-member Board of Trustees. The members of the Board are elected every year by the General Assembly of the church members. Although everybody who joins the church services and other activities is considered a member of the church, the General Assembly consists of a smaller number of people (reportedly, 125 at the time of my fieldwork). They are all baptized Christians, who pay an annual membership fee. Each of the church members can be elected as a member of the Board on equal footing, provided he or she is a respected member of the congregation, gets recommendations from the priest, and is of Bulgarian origin (the latter is not mentioned anymore in the OCA statute but is still important for the parishioners). There are no special requirements for the President of the Board, who is usually a respectable member of the congregation, active in all church initiatives. There is also a Control Committee, which monitors the expenditures made by the Board.

⁷ In 2015, the congregation remained without a Bulgarian priest for nine months (Petrova, 2015).

The church gets no external financial support – neither from the Bulgarian state, nor from OCA. Its income is formed by donations, membership fees, sale of candles, lunches, dinners, picnics and other events organized by the church (the food is cooked by volunteers and sold for a reasonable price, and the profit remains for the church). People support the church by voluntary labor, as well. The church income covers the salaries of the priests, the bills, the mortgages, the purchase of furniture and equipment, repair jobs, etc.

The Bulgarian-language school at the church exists since 1999 and offers classes from first to seventh grade. It is licensed by the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science (MES). The subjects taught include Bulgarian language, history and geography of Bulgaria, as well as religion. Classes take place every Sunday from 9 am to 1 pm. During my on-site observations in 2006, there were seven teachers (two of them in religion), all volunteers⁸, and about sixty children at the school. Education is free of charge, except for a small annual fee that covers some of the current needs for stationary and other materials. Pupils get the textbooks for free at the beginning of the school year and give them back to serve the next-year students. The curriculum complies with the requirements of MES, and after successfully passing the final tests, the students get their certificates at the end of each year and diplomas at the end of the 7th year.

Apart from the school, since 2002 the church hosts a theatrical troupe and the “Horo” folk dance group. The troupe gives performances in Bulgarian, and the dance group regularly participates in the concerts and celebrations, organized in the church. Currently, a few more groups (modern dance, ballet, etc.) rehearse and perform on the church premises (Vukov & Borisova, 2017).

In addition to the religious ceremonies, performed by the church, there are two annual picnics (such is the limit set by the city authorities), organized by the church – on Prophet Elijah’s Day (July 20) and Dormition of Our Most Holy Lady the Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary (August 15). There are also a number of “vecherinki” (dinner dances) throughout the year – on the church patron's day on October 14, on St. Nicholas' Day (December 6), on the New Year's Eve, on March 3 (the Liberation Day), and on May 24 (the Day of the Slavonic Alphabet and Bulgarian Culture). Occasionally, the Board organizes performances of popular Bulgarian artists, such as pop, jazz, opera, and folk singers, theatre artists and movie actors. These visits are usually organized together with the General Consulate of Bulgaria in Chicago and are co-sponsored by wealthier Bulgarian Americans.

⁸ All the teachers had other jobs to provide for their families. In 2009, MES launched the Native Language and Culture Abroad Program, aimed at providing financial and other forms of support to the Bulgarian schools abroad. As a result, the number of the schools have jumped up. In Chicago, for example, the current number of Bulgarian schools is 12 (against 4 in 2006) (Borisova & Koulov, 2017, p. 401).

All these activities make the church an important factor in immigrants' lives.

Functions of the Ethnic Church in Immigration

Compared to the practice in Bulgaria, it is surprising how often Bulgarian immigrants in Chicago refer to the church in trying to solve different problems, most of which with no relevance to religion. On Sunday mornings a fluctuating but significant number of people go to *St. John of Rila* to join the mass, and to meet friends and acquaintances after that. At noon, the number of visitors increases and this leaves the impression that many people go to the church only to meet friends and acquaintances and/or to have “typical” Bulgarian dishes for lunch. Everybody, who is looking for a job, flat, or some other service, goes to the church in search of information, obtainable from the advertisements, or from other people they meet there. Apparently, the church not only meets the religious needs of the diaspora but serves a wider range of functions. I will briefly discuss below some of these functions, with particular regard to the role of the church in forging and negotiating immigrants' identities, and in being the arena of in-group collisions and divisions. In doing so, I will also try to show how the church has adapted itself to the new social environment, obtaining the features of an ethnic church.

In 2006, one of the priests at the church described its mission as a spiritual, cultural and educational center, a fortress of national identity,⁹ a place of hope and trust for the newcomers in the foreign land, and a servant of the growing Bulgarian community in Chicago. This description summarizes the various functions the church has in the life of this community and reveals the complexity of the institution. In all observations and interviews I made, the relationship between the church and its congregation was invariably brought forward, at the expense of presenting the church as a religious institution (i.e., belonging to a particular hierarchical structure, being in relation with other religious institutions and with the civil administration, propagating a certain religious doctrine). Moreover, many of my interlocutors have confirmed that they refer to the church much more often than they used to in the home country.

Besides the Sunday mass, religious ceremonies are performed on the bigger holidays in the Orthodox calendar. These include Easter, Dormition of Our Most Holy Lady the Mother of God, St. George's Day (May 6), Christmas, and St. Basil's Day (January 1). Other popular religious ceremonies include baptizing, weddings, and funerals. Most of the time, the church is locked, but

⁹ He used the word “bulgarshtinata”, which can be translated as “everything Bulgarian”.

the priest who lives next door is always available to let in late visitors who need to say a prayer and spend some time in privacy with the Lord.

Religious service, dissemination of Orthodox faith, observance of orthodoxy and orthopraxy are undoubtedly the major mission of the church and its priests. However, for many parishioners this is not the only (not even the most important) function of the church in immigration.

There are inevitably personal, as well as generational and gender differences in the immigrants' motives for church attendance, but in this case I will argue that it is driven primarily by the non-religious activities taking place at *St. John of Rila*. This is not new for the American context. Most probably it originated from the practice of the Protestant churches but spanned over other denominations in their competition to attract more and more believers. Sociologist Stephen Warner (1993) points out that religion in the United States operates under market conditions (pp. 1053-1055). In contrast to Bulgaria, where the status of Orthodoxy is, so to speak, taken for granted (it is usually described as the traditional and leading denomination in the country), in the U.S. it has to "market" its ideas, and make efforts to better satisfy the needs and expectations of the "customers" (see also Kurien, 1998, p. 58; Karamihova, 2004, p. 72). In seeking to achieve this, *St. John of Rila*, as well as the other Bulgarian churches in Chicago, have become not only a place for worship, but also an educational center, a stage for various cultural performances, a club for fellow countrymen, an information center, a dining place (even a bar), and a charitable agency. It is exactly this combination of functions, which has makes the churches the most popular "Bulgarian" sites in Chicago. Obviously, this is all the result of the process of adaptation of the Bulgarian Orthodox churches to the conditions in the host society, as well as to the specific needs of the immigrant community. Historically, the first Bulgarian churches in North America, established in the early twentieth century, functioned as immigrant integration centers, rather than as solely places of worship (Mihaylova, 2017; Traikov, 1993). This corresponded with the immigrants' need to have a place of their own, where they can gather together with co-nationals, preserve and express their specific cultural identity. Other factors should also be taken into consideration here. One of them is the socio-political role of Orthodoxy and the Bulgarian Exarchate (yrs.1870-1953) during the second half of the 19th and the first half of the 20th century, especially in the geographic region of Macedonia, from where the early Bulgarian migrants to North America predominantly originated.¹⁰ Another factor is the impact of the host society, namely the place and role of religion and religious institutions in it.

¹⁰ I refer here only to immigrants who defined themselves as ethnic Bulgarians and who called their churches in America "Bulgarian-Macedonian" (Mihaylova, 2017, p. 242). At the turn of the twentieth century the ethnically diverse region of Macedonia was part of the Ottoman Empire, so all migrants who came from there possessed Ottoman passports.

The interior changes (the seats), the facilities at the church area, the replacement of the traditional “*kurban*” (votive meal) with picnics, the online dissemination of the church bulletin, etc. – these are all outcomes of the process of adaptation to the local context. Many of my interlocutors were ironic about the efforts of the priests at *St. John of Rila* to make things look more “like the American churches”. Apparently, however, these efforts were a good strategy as they had achieved the intended effect of keeping people’s attendance of the church high.

In the competition at the religious “market”, the Bulgarian Orthodox churches in Chicago have directed their efforts to a particular target group – the immigrants of Bulgarian origin.¹¹ They have been successfully exploiting a consumer niche, formed by the enlarging Bulgarian community in the city. Accordingly, they have developed a strategy adjusted to the specific features of the target community. I will only mention two of these features – the big number of non-religious people among the immigrants from Bulgaria¹² and the prevalence of unskilled immigrant workers with poor command of English, who need assistance in making their first steps in U.S. society. The practice of chain migration,¹³ which is common among the Bulgarians in Chicago, implies a relatively high degree of connectedness among them, which justifies the interest of the Bulgarian Orthodox churches solely in them. The result is the *ethnicization* of the Bulgarian Orthodox churches on American soil.

Religion in Bulgaria is often interpreted in ethnic terms. It is often regarded as cultural (family, ethnic) tradition, rather than as faith in God or a system of worship (Elchinova, 1999). In official and everyday discourses alike, religious affiliation is regularly described as an attribute of the ethnic group and is named accordingly: e.g., an ethnic Bulgarian is “by definition” Orthodox Christian, and an ethnic Turk is “always” Muslim. Consequently, in the vernacular these denominations may appear respectively as “Bulgarian” and “Turkish” faith (Elchinova, 2001, p. 65). The roots of this mixing of ethnicity with religion can be sought in the millet system of the Ottoman Empire and its transforma-

¹¹ In 2006, the bulk of the congregation of *St. John of Rila* were ethnic Bulgarians, with rare exceptions – a few Greeks, married to Bulgarians, a few Ukrainians from the neighborhood, occasional guests of another origin, usually invited by Bulgarian friends to particular events.

¹² It is hard to provide statistical evidence in support of this statement. In national censuses, for example, most respondents define their religious affiliation – Orthodox Christian, Sunni Muslim, or other. However, studies focused on religiosity, especially qualitative ones, reveal that more often than not respondents in Bulgaria belong to a certain religion only nominally, in terms of heritage or tradition, and not in terms of faith (Fotev, 2000; Elchinova, 1999). Of course, the degree of religiosity among Bulgarian nationals varies, but it is particularly low among people who grew up under state socialism, i.e., between 1944 and 1989.

¹³ This calls for further exploration, but almost all my Bulgarian interlocutors in Chicago (except for students and professionals who came on a contract) described their experience as chain migration, usually following the steps of relatives, friends, and/ or residents from the same town.

tions under the impact of nationalist ideology, which gained momentum in the Balkans in the nineteenth century. One of the results of these transformations was that Orthodoxy became a major marker of national belonging in the Christian dominated Balkan states (Roudometof, 2001). In the course of time and in the context of changing national ideologies, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church (BOC) has affirmed its position as one of the pillars of the Bulgarian nation and national identity (Fotev, 1994).

In immigration, BOC becomes a powerful symbol of the society of origin, of everything Bulgarian – the state, the nation, and the *ethnos* (Borisova et al., 2015). In Chicago, the Bulgarian Orthodox churches act as representatives of the Bulgarian community, alongside the Bulgarian Consulate and the Bulgarian-language press. Some of the biggest sponsors of *St. John of Rila* are Bulgarian-born Turks and Muslims. The church welcomes all Bulgarian citizens to its activities, regardless of their ethnic and religious affiliation. However, the association of the Bulgarian church with the Bulgarian ethnicity prevails. And it is worth reminding that *St. John of Rila*, as an OCA member, plays such a role, even though it is fully independent from the Bulgarian state and Patriarchate.

In the case of the *St. John of Rila* in Chicago, the church is the driving force behind the construction of a Bulgarian community in immigration – something observed in the U.S. in regard with other churches and denominations, too (Warner & Wittner, 1998; Kasinitz et al., 2004; Kennedy & Roudometof, 2002). The evidence for this is plentiful.

First of all, the service and sermon are held in both Bulgarian and Old Church Slavonic, with the occasional insertion in English. This means that the service is oriented exclusively to a Bulgarian-speaking audience (on occasions of intermarriages, the English-language part in the wedding ceremony is expanded).¹⁴ Furthermore, the institutional hierarchy is organized along ethnic lines. It is still a practice at *St. John of Rila* to appoint priests of Bulgarian origin;¹⁵ the same requirement applied to the members of the church Board. Another marker of the ethnic character of the church is the establishment of the Bulgarian language school, whose maintenance and improvement are considered a priority by the church Board. Moreover, the school is highly valued by the congregation. All the other cultural-educational activities organized by the church (celebrations, concerts, and picnics) are Bulgarian-specific. They are focused on Bulgarian folklore, national holidays, national heroes, traditional cuisine, etc. The number of national symbols (portraits, monuments,

¹⁴ With the increasing role of the second generation of immigrants and the possibility to have non-Bulgarian priests, the use of English in liturgy and ceremonies increases.

¹⁵ This requirement used to be included in the statute of the Bulgarian Diocese at OCA. Even though it has been removed a few years ago, the congregation members still prefer priests of Bulgarian origin.

memorial plaques) displayed on church property increases in time (Vukov & Borisova, 2017, pp. 22-27). Thus, the church simultaneously plays the role of a temple, a school, a Bulgarian club, and even that of an ethnic restaurant. In other words, it is a place of structured relations between co-ethnics, where everything specifically Bulgarian is put forward and praised – language, music, food, interior.

Therefore, it can be claimed that the primary function of this church is to structure a Bulgarian ethnic community within the larger American society and to foster a sense of belonging and self-esteem among the members of this community.¹⁶ At the same time, the church activities are not meant to hinder the process of integration in the mainstream identity, they are rather aimed at preserving the ethnic origin as a significant side-stream identity. It is exactly in this position that *St. John of Rila* exists as a congregation and succeeds to motivate a large number of people to attend to, participate in, and identify with its activities.

Despite its community-structuring role, the BOC in Chicago becomes an arena of inner differentiation and contradictions. Thus, for example, in 2006 the congregation at *St. John of Rila* consisted for the larger part of first-generation immigrants, for most of whom immigration was related to downward mobility. For them the only opportunity for upward mobility was within the immigrant community itself and obtaining a prestigious position in the church administration (becoming a Board member or a renowned sponsor or activist of the church initiatives) was a marker of success. This had fostered infighting and struggle for influence, and gave rise to rumors of scandals and corruption, which were favorite subjects of discussion among all my interlocutors. Those contradictions appeared to be gender specific: more often than not men got involved in the inner power struggles within the Bulgarian immigrant community.¹⁷ There was also tension between the “old” and the “new” immigrants. “Old” immigrants were already well-established, emphasized their higher social status in comparison to the recent immigrants, and expected respect and recognition from the “newcomers”. The latter tried to compensate for their unsatisfactory position in wider society by making money and fighting for prestige and respect within the Bulgarian immigrant community at large, and the church congregation in particular. Those in the Bulgarian immigrant community, who were skilled professionals with university degrees, had other options

¹⁶ Most researchers who study the role of the Bulgarian Orthodox churches abroad, point out their function as national-consolidating centres (see for example Vukov & Borisova, 2017; Borisova et al., 2015; Mihailova, 2017). This observation refers to post-1990 migrants, among whom the representatives of the first generation are still the majority. With the increasing participation of the second and the third generations, who are better integrated in the host society in comparison with their parents and grandparents, the ethnic character of the churches tends to fade away.

¹⁷ For parallels with other religious congregations in U.S.A. see for instance Kurien, 1998.

to achieve prestige in American society, and often preferred to socialize outside the Bulgarian churches, disappointed with the conflicts within.

Currently, it is not only the number of Bulgarians in Chicago that has grown bigger, but so has the diversity within their church congregations. Dilyana Ivanova, who is a researcher of Bulgarian origin living in Chicago, speaks about the community elite (Ivanova, 2017, p. 287) – something that supports my observations about the inner differentiation among the immigrant community in the city. How did this elite emerge, how did it get recognition, who and why does belong to it – these and other questions are still to be examined. Their answers will help outline the possible trajectories of the future transformation of the Bulgarian ethnic churches in Chicago – towards religious institutions with a multi-ethnic scope, or towards insular congregations.

Conclusion

The discussion about the role of the *St. John of Rila* Bulgarian Orthodox church in Chicago reveals that the church functions as a typical ethnic congregation, whose major goal is the construction and maintenance of the Bulgarian immigrant community in the city, as well as its adaptation to the host society. In this process the church itself has significantly transformed and adapted to the American context. The multiple functions and activities that the church performs have turned it into a preferred meeting point and place of socialization for the Bulgarian immigrants in the city. In this, the church competes with other “ethnic” sites in the city: two cultural clubs, the General Consulate, several Sunday schools, Bulgarian cafes and restaurants. Whereas in 2006 the church seemed to be the most preferred center of community consolidation, currently it has lost its leading position in favor of the Bulgarian schools and other cultural organizations. Particular supporting policies of the Bulgarian state regarding the schools abroad and the concurrent negative trends within the umbrella Orthodox institutions to which the Bulgarian churches in Chicago belong, have catalyzed a process of emancipation of the schools from the churches, as well as the growth of their number and significance for the immigrant community. Nevertheless, the opportunities for community activity and upward social mobility, which the church offers, help it preserve its role of a focal point in immigrants’ lives. Yet, the inner differentiation and the emphatically ethnic character of the church pose questions about its ability to meet the needs and expectations of a wider number of Bulgarian immigrants, and especially, of their more Americanized second and third generations.

Unfortunately, the most recent news from the *St. John of Rila* Orthodox church in Chicago are pessimistic. The congregation is not in favor of the new head of the Bulgarian Diocese at OCA Bishop Alexander (of Russian origin),

who in 2007 replaced the late Archbishop Kiril, who was Bulgarian. They accuse him of being too estranged and insensitive to the needs of the Bulgarian congregation. As a result, voices are raised to leave the OCA and join the Holy Synod in Sofia. However, the relations with the latter are not easy either.¹⁸ In addition, the church faces serious financial issues, because one of the former priests took out a huge bank loan which he guaranteed for with the church property. All these problems are leading the church to the worst possible scenario about its future, as there is a risk of it closing down.

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¹⁸ See for example https://www.eurochicago.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/letter_in_english.pdf (accessed March 16, 2021; Hotinova, 2015).

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RELIGIOUS MINORITIES AND SECULARISM IN SLOVENIA: THE CASE OF NATIVE FAITH

MANCA RAČIČ

Abstract: Pavel Medvešček-Klančar (1933 – 2020) first introduced the Native Faith, known as *Staroverstvo*, to the broader public in two of his most essential publications: “Flight into the Shadow of the Moon: Tales of Old Beliefs” (“Let v Lunino senco: Pripovedi o starih verovanjih”, Medvešček & Podobnik, 2006) and “From the Invisible Cardinal Direction: Unveiled Secrets of Native Faith” (“Iz nevidne strani neba: Razkrite skrivnosti staroverstva”, Medvešček, 2015). Today, many associations, communities, groups and individuals mould their content from the writings about Slovene pre-Christian, pagan traditions and beliefs. They thus constitute the most significant and well-known part of Modern Slovene Paganism, which is therefore a part of Slovenia’s religious minorities. Today, the most visible among the groups/communities are Slovene Native Faith Association (*Društvo Slovenski staroverci*), the Slovene Native Faith Community of the Children of Triglav (*Slovenska rodnoverska skupnost “Otroci Triglava”*), Veles – Centre of Lifelong Learning, Personal Growth and Connection with Ancestors (*Veles – center vseživljenjskega učenja, osebne rasti in povezovanja s predniki*), and Matjar – Association for the Study of Posočje Naturalism (*Matjar – društvo za raziskovanje posoškega naravoverstva*). The recent closing of the Office for Religious Communities presents further challenges to religious minorities in maintaining their position as equal religious communities in Slovenia, where the Roman Catholic Church still dominates numerically and culturally. The article gives insight into the views and opinions of some members, followers, and believers of the Native Faith on secular values in modern Slovene society, as well as into their fears and hopes for the future. The methodological basis consists of participant observation and 7 semi-structured interviews with believers, followers, and researchers of the Native Faith.

Keywords: Native Faith (*Staroverstvo*), Slovenia, Neopaganism, secularism, religious minority

Introduction

At the beginning of June 2021, it was announced to the Slovene public that the Office for Religious Communities (hereinafter the Office), which until then had operated under the Slovenian Ministry of Culture, had been closed (Jazbec, 2021). Even though the work would continue under the auspices of the Ministry in a different form, the news caused great concern for religious minorities across the country regarding their positions following the reorganization.¹

The main topic of the present article will be an examination and review of the status of religious minorities in the Republic of Slovenia. This paper is a part of a broader research field of the author, which is funded by the Slovenian Research Agency. Within this context, I will focus on religious communities and individuals who inspire from the writings about Slovene pre-Christian, pagan traditions and beliefs. I will be particularly interested in how informally established groups, organizations, communities, and individuals who are not formal members of any of these groups, but consider themselves Native Faith (*Staroverstvo*) believers, posit themselves within the national legal system. Furthermore, I will observe how the legislation and the state influence their experience as members of an alternative, minority religious community. I will be particularly interested in their concerns and discontents. I will also highlight the context of the Roman Catholic Church (hereinafter the Church), specifically the view of the interlocutors on its position within the legal framework of the state, and the potential tensions that arise from the direct or indirect contact of followers, believers and researchers of the Native Faith² with the majority

¹ The closing of the Office was the culmination of a process that had been ongoing for several years. Even though the current right-wing government led by Janez Janša shows no interest in maintaining grounds for religious pluralism, this indifference was also present in the governments of his centre-left predecessors Dr. Miro Cerar and Marjan Šarec.

² The literal translation of the word *Staroverstvo* would be “old belief”, therefore the followers would be called “old believers” (see for example Črnič, 2013, p. 183). However, this movement has nothing in common with the Russian branch of Old Believers, Eastern Orthodox Christians, and to avoid confusion, I decided to use Native Faith as an equivalent. It is very important to note that different followers/believers in the Native Faith use different concepts (for example, Naturalism (*Naravoverstvo*); Slavic Native Faith (*Rodnoverstvo*, *Staroverstvo*) in different social contexts, and therefore delving into the differences would not be fruitful. Scholars of religion regard the Slavic Native Faith or Rodnovery as a modern Pagan religion (Shnirelman, 2013, p. 62; Shizhenskii & Aitamurto, 2017, p. 115), as well as a new religious movement (Shnirelman, 2002, p. 197; Dostálová, 2013, p. 165). Kaarina Aitamurto has suggested that Rodnovery could be regarded as “an umbrella term that gathers together various forms of religiosity” (Aitamurto, 2016, p. 65). The religious scholar Alexey Gaidukov has described “Slavic Neopaganism” as a term pertaining to “all quasi-religious, political, ideological and philosophical systems which are based on the reconstruction and construction of pre-Christian Slavic traditions” (Gaidukov, 2013, p. 316). Adrian Ivakhiv has defined Rodnovery as a movement which “harkens back to the pre-Christian beliefs and practices of ancient Slavic peoples” (Ivakhiv, 2005, p. 209), while according to the historian and ethnologist Victor A. Shnirelman,

Catholic community. My research question mainly concerns the views of followers and believers as to whether, in the context of the closing of the Office for Religious Communities, Slovenia is a secular country. The methodological basis consists of participant observation and 9 semi-structured interviews with believers, followers, and researchers of the Native Faith. For various reasons, only seven of them are directly presented in the paper.

The article begins with a brief discussion of the history of religious pluralism in Slovenia, with an emphasis on the events during the time of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the effects of Western influences. It then discusses the connection between secular values and religious minorities, and incorporates the opinions and observations of Dr Gregor Lesjak, the former Director of the Office for Religious Communities at the Ministry of Culture. This is followed by a summary of the establishing of the Native Faith, incorporating the opinions of the believers, followers, and researchers of the Native Faith regarding the equality of religious communities in the Republic of Slovenia. The subtopics include the closing of the Office, views on the role of the Slovene state, and views on the role of the Church.

Religiosity and the legal framework of religious pluralism in Slovenia during the second half of the 20th century

To better understand the historical and political context in which the Native Faith movement has arisen, it is necessary to briefly look at the context in which these “new”, sometimes also described as Neopagan³ religious practices have developed and grown (see, for example, Črnič, 2012, p. 248). In this chapter I will focus on the political and historical events in the second half of the 20th century that greatly influenced contemporary discussions on religious pluralism and the position of religious minorities in mostly Christian Slovene society.⁴

Rodnovers present themselves as “followers of some genuine pre-Christian Slavic, Russian or Slavic-Aryan Paganism” (Shnirelman, 2000, p. 18).

³ When using the term Neopagan, I refer to modern or contemporary Paganism, also called Neopaganism, which is not the “original” Paganism of ancient times, to which Pagans today have only indirect access due to the fragmentary nature of the surviving materials. According to Strmiska, it is a “religion created by modern people, taking inspiration from what is known of the older, original Paganism and then applying this inspiration in various ways, from seeking to reconstruct the old Pagan ways as accurately as possible according to the best available knowledge of the past, to reinterpreting or altering old traditions in accordance with contemporary ways of thinking, to adding or borrowing further religious elements as needed to suit current conditions of life” (Strmiska, 2017, p. 168).

⁴ According to the 2002 census, 57.8% of the population is Catholic, 10.1% atheist, 2.4% Muslim, and 2.3% Serbian Orthodox (US Department of State, 2021c).

The history of the European continent has been significantly marked by Catholicism, and Slovenia is no exception in this regard. The Church exercised its privileged position until the end of World War II, when Yugoslavia officially became a socialist state. Under the new-old European principle of *cuius regio, eius religio* (“whose land, their religion”), Yugoslavia’s socialist federal republic assumed a left-wing anti-clerical position, paving the way for social secularization (Črnič et al., 2013, p. 210). The response to the introduction of secularization in Yugoslavia was ambivalent (Kerševan, 1993). While the Communist Party abolished privileged rights for the Roman Catholic Church, it simultaneously introduced an ideological monopoly based on secular values; the religious-like specifics of the new regime were described as a “secular or civil religion” (Črnič et al., 2013, p. 211; cf. Smrke, 1990; Flere & Klanjšek, 2007, p. 10).

The main structural changes shaped by Yugoslavia in the 1960s and 1970s were: (1) a decrease in adherents of the Catholic faith – possibly due to general social secularization or conversion due to the more significant presence of other belief systems; (2) the diversification of the denomination of Catholics as a consequence of the ideological changes in the Second Vatican Council and their adoption (for example, the separation of church and state); and (3) the appearance of a more lenient attitude towards religions and churches on the part of the Communist Party (Črnič et al., 2013, p. 211). The leniency shown during this period also coincides with the beginning of the counterculture in the West (Cannell, 2010, p. 88; cf. Heelas, 1996), in which people began to reject traditional church systems, mainly because of their association with authority. Individuals began to look for spiritual rather than religious practices that suited them individually and that covered the fields of their interests and needs (Heelas, 1996). This practice also found its way across the communist bloc.

The relaxing of restrictions on the movement of people and consequently ideas was influenced by the cooling of Yugoslavia’s ties with the Soviet Union in 1948 (Črnič, 2012, p. 212). As Barbara Potrata writes, the opening of the Yugoslav borders in the 1960s also marked the beginning of a heightened search for the “authentic self”, including in Eastern European countries. This seeking of self-affirmation only intensified in the 1970s, mainly in the form of youth revolts, and consequently in the search for alternative lifestyles they brought home from their travels. As Potrata notes, these young people were often the family members of respected and privileged members of the Communist Party (for example, children of ambassadors or simply those who had sufficient resources to explore the world). Furthermore, the seeking of and desire for alternative life practices can also be an indication of young people’s dissatisfaction with the official ideology of the time (Potrata, 2004, p. 366; cf. Potrata 2001a; 2001b).

Towards the end of the 1980s, a safer space was formed for the performance of alternative religious practices. Fifteen alternative religious groups were already officially recognized, and at least twice as many were not. Even during socialist times, Slovenia was not very far removed from the events in the West. Also, migrations to Slovenia from other Yugoslav republics accelerated the influx of foreign religious communities into Slovenia and created an even more pluralistic attitude towards the so-called “Others”. The death of President Josip Broz Tito in 1980 was followed by an even greater abandonment of all the regime’s previous demands. Religious affiliation and practice increased, particularly among Slovenes (Črnič et al., 2013, p. 212).

Slovenia’s independence in 1991 created an even safer space for expressing religiosity, especially alternative religiosity, leading to the evolution of a commitment to the preservation and development of religious pluralism. The fall of communism and rise of alternative religions is quite a common phenomenon in all former communist countries in Europe (see, for example, Senvaitytė, 2018; Bužeková, 2020). Following independence, the number of registered religious communities increased to 43 (Črnič et al., 2013, p. 212). Today, 55 religious communities and churches are registered in Slovenia, among which the most visible are the Roman Catholic Church, the Islamic Community of Slovenia, the Serbian Orthodox Church, and the Evangelical Church. However, many more are still unregistered for various reasons (Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia, 2022).⁵ Religious communities are granted their rights under the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia. The constitution guarantees the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, and the right to express or share their beliefs. It provides for freedom of religion and individuals’ right to express their beliefs. The constitution declares that all religious communities shall have equal rights and provides for the separation of church and state. The constitution affords equal human rights and fundamental freedoms to all individuals irrespective of their religion; it also prohibits incitement of religious discrimination and inflammation of religious hatred and intolerance. The constitution also recognizes the right of conscientious objection to military service for religious reasons (Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia, 2021).

Even though Slovenia is constitutionally and legally grounded in the democratic values of religious pluralism and equality, religious minorities can have insights into worlds that exist behind the letter of the law. Their status as minorities can make it difficult to access certain resources and privileges, consequently reinforcing feelings of inferiority and neglect. Finally, this affects their

⁵ Currently, the only two groups of followers of the Slovene Native Faith registered as a religious community at the Ministry of Culture are the Slovene Native Faith Community of the Children of Triglav and the Upasana community.

views on the existence of democracy, and the democratic values of the state that they are legally a part of.

Secularism and religious minorities

In their alternative view of the impact of religion on the political values of Muslims in Europe, Elisa Banfi, Matteo Gianni and Marco Giugni ask whether “belonging to a discriminated religious minority leads members of such minority to endorse a secular view of institutions”. According to the authors, such stigmatization could motivate European Muslims to endorse the “religious neutrality of state authorities” (Banfi, Gianni, & Giugni, 2015, p. 2). The counter-argument for weaker support for secular values among Muslims is that their religious values are seen as being incompatible with secular values. The authors conclude and emphasize that religiosity needs to be “analysed as a multifaceted phenomenon in relation to other religious collective identities,” and that “under certain circumstances, belonging to a persecuted religious minority may increase support for secular values, while at the same time religiosity has a negative impact on attitudes toward secularism” (Banfi, Gianni & Giugni, 2015, p. 13).

Pazit Ben-Nun Bloom and Gizem Arikan also describe religiosity as a multidimensional phenomenon; the variable dimensions of religiosity which influence personal and communal positions towards secularism are belief, behaviour and belonging (Ben-Nun Bloom & Arikan, 2013, p. 376). In their studies, they try to demonstrate that the position of religion with respect to democratic attitudes depends on which dimensions or mechanisms of religiosity one looks at (Ben-Nun Bloom & Arikan, 2013, p. 375).⁶ Belief, behaviour and belonging have differential effects on attitudes towards democracy (Ben-Nun Bloom & Arikan, 2012), as well as the role of different mechanisms in their support for democracy (Ben-Nun, Bloom & Arikan, 2013). The results of their study suggest there is some regularity in the mechanisms responsible for the effect of religiosity on democratic support that extend into different religious traditions (Ben-Nun Bloom & Arikan, 2013).

Secular values have often been associated with democratic values, “as secularism is against intolerant ideas undermining egalitarian policies and rejects preference for, or persecution of, different groups of the population who have a different faith or different moral customs” (Banfi, Gianni, & Giugni, 2015, p. 5; see also Mahmood, 2012). They can be a stronghold for groups that have suffered religion-based repression and discrimination. Furthermore, new ques-

⁶ Many other authors have tried to explain the effects of religion and religiosity on democratic values (see, for example, Filetti, 2013; Forbes & Zampelli, 2013; Nagel & Staeheli, 2011).

tions emerge as we try to understand the debate around religious equality or equity. Dr Gregor Lesjak is the former Director of the Office for Religious Communities at the Slovene Ministry of Culture. He explains that with the closing of the Office, tasks that were previously in its domain

[...] have been assumed by the leadership of the Ministry, [who were appointed] along political lines. [These appointments are] no longer professional. And then the attitude towards religious communities is regulated by [political] party preferences. This is reflected, for example, in the receptivity to the proposals and problems of the religious community.

In his view, all religious communities are equal in the eyes of the state. He supports this with an example of monthly social security payments that the state pays to all religious employees. In order to receive these payments, the community must prove that it has a minimum of 1,000 members:

Significantly, if a religious community wishes to acquire this right for its clerics, it can demonstrate, as the law unfortunately calls it, a reasonable proportion of one cleric per 1,000 members. You have to prove to the state that you have 1,000 members, and then the state will contribute to your social security for one religious employee. Now, what can we say about this? Is this equal, or is it not equal? This is very equal. I will tell you why. Because equality under the law means something other than [what it means] in the minds of people who sometimes feel marginalized.

As Lesjak explains, there is no reason to blame the Catholic Church, since it is “essentially the largest owner of cultural heritage in Slovenia. [The Republic of] Slovenia finances cultural heritage, [and] helps private education, not just the private education of the Catholic Church.” He continues that what needs to be regulated in our country is

[...] above all, a certain awareness of religious freedom. Religious freedom is a fundamental human right [...]. Special rights and privileges are a matter for the majority in parliament and the Constitutional Court. [...] We used to have a council for dialogue about it, but I can say that the religious communities themselves did not understand this. Their position was: yes, let us just go there, we will just talk.

Lesjak emphasizes that “Slovenia is so well developed in this field,” and improvements could be made collectively with the formation of consciousness and dialogue. He states that the 2007 Religious Freedom Act “will need to be improved in several segments” and adds that even a perfectly written law must be adapted to practice (see also Črnič & Lesjak, 2016). In the field of religion, various interests, and the idea of regulating public life, are at odds:

These interests need to be reconciled so that they [religious communities] do not overwhelm each other. In fact, in Slovenia we have

an extremely libertarian system, so that after the intervention of the Constitutional Court (the law was only adopted in 2013), a religious community can be practically anyone (with at least 10 members). The process is not that complicated, you just need to communicate with the state body, and this means that you can get this special, as they say, legal organizational form. This is not possible at all in most countries because you have some degree registration, and some conditions, and some privileges.

Even though Slovenia has one of the most open systems for registration of religious communities in comparison with some other former Communist countries,⁷ this does not necessarily mean that the religious field represents less of a struggle to minority members. Individuals and groups enter the religious field in order to obtain legitimacy among the broader society, where macro-social, national, political, religious, ideological, and scientific discourses meet and potentially conflict with micro-community discourses in the struggle for power and the construction of religious/local identities (Ebstyne-King, 2003; Kapaló, 2013, pp. 2-5). In Pierre Bourdieu's language and his concept of "field theory" (Jenkins, 2006 [1992], p. 52), the struggle between the local Catholic Church and religious minorities understandably motivates the desire of Catho-

⁷ For example, Slovakia has extremely rigid legal conditions for registration, which offers some publicity and funds. Small groups and communities find it almost impossible to succeed, since they need to acquire 50,000 signatures of "true" believers (not 10 as in the case of Slovenia) that do not include just sympathisers. Christianity is seen in Slovakia as a synonym for the national religion and has many adherents, but also political power due to the Vatican accord. These agreements gave the Catholic church many rights – the right to proselytize within the school system, hospitals and prisons, and most importantly, the right to comment on new laws (see for example Zachar-Podolinská, Tižik, & Majo, 2019). In contrast, in the Czech Republic, whose population are often described as "some of the least religious people in Eastern Europe" (Froese, 2005, p. 269), the clear division between church and state is also reflected in the registration procedure. The state has two tiers when applying for a religious community: the first tier consists of presenting 300 signatures of adult members who have a permanent residence in the country. For second-tier registration, a group must have been registered with the Department of Churches for 10 years, have published annual financial reports throughout the time of its registration, and have membership equal to at least 0.1 percent of the population (approximately 10,000 people). Second-tier registration entitles religious groups to government subsidies as well as the tax benefits granted to first-tier groups (US Department of State, 2021a). In Poland, as in other democratic countries, all citizens are guaranteed freedom of conscience and religion, protected by the 1997 Polish Constitution. However, to act as a legal entity, the community must be registered. According to the 2019 report on religious freedom, 15 religious communities were registered in Poland, while an additional 166 registered religious groups and five aggregate religious organizations do not have a statutorily defined relationship with the state (Simpson, 2013, p. 115). To register, the law requires a group to submit a notarized application with the personal information of at least 100 citizen members, along with other important information such as information on its doctrine and practices; identifying information about its leaders; a description of the role of the clergy, etc. (US Department of State, 2021b). For information on the Russian Federation see the writings of Aitamurto (2016), and on the Baltic Region those of Strmiska (2017).

lics to maintain the image of the national Church and to limit the importance of alternative religions. In this so-called “social arena within which struggles, or manoeuvres take place over specific sources or stakes and access to them,” (Jenkins, 2006 [1992], p. 52) communities and agents oppose, defy, and negotiate for power with macro-social, scientific, religious, national, or political structures and institutions (Bourdieu, 1993; De Certeau, 1988 [1984]; Wacquant, 1989, p. 39). This also applies to the Native Faith and its struggles for social status and adequate resources.

Views on the position of the Native Faith as a religious minority

Pavel Medvešček described *Staroverstvo* as a way of life, understanding, and an attitude towards the natural environment (see for example Vrabec, 2020).⁸ From the 1950s onwards, he allegedly held extensive conversations with surviving members of the community that practiced the “old beliefs” (see for example Medvešček, 2015), sometimes described as “a group of unmarried single uncles” (Ravnik, 2017), in the Posočje region, the Cerklno Hills region and partly also in the Karst region. Medvešček came across them for the first time during his fieldwork at the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia. He was granted exclusive access by the last remaining members of the belief community to the oral narratives, belief practices, healing objects, rituals, and terminology of the believers. However, he promised to keep their stories and knowledge a secret until 2007, when the moon’s edge would turn towards the Earth, therefore for the next 42 years.

In 2015, Medvešček published “From the Invisible Cardinal Direction”; written in the form of ethnographic testimonies and dialogues as uninterpreted “material”, it was additionally presented to the broader Slovene public by its mainly laic followers and researchers (see for example Čok, 2012; Kenda, 2018;

⁸ Although most followers of the Native Faith “believe” in the existence of this religious practice, the belief does not necessarily involve the performance of various rites or other forms of worship. Followers often describe the belief as a “way of living”. This vocabulary emphasizes the ecological perspective – nature conservation or a nature conservation component, where followers draw inspiration for their creations from nature and humans’ inappropriate attitudes towards it. Also, in my discussions with Native Faith believers and followers, they usually emphasize that this is not a religion, such as Christianity or Islam. This strikes a resemblance to the observations of Fanella Cannell, that “people are rejecting the term religion itself while attempting (sometimes in contradictory ways) to create forms of practice that many anthropologists would still classify as religion. An unusual degree of overlap exists between terms social science uses in the analysis of contemporary forms of religious and secular experience and the terms that informants may use in daily life” (Cannell, 2010, p. 88). As this is a storyline of all religious anthropologists, it will perhaps be addressed more extensively in the future.

Hren, 2018; Guardjančič, 2018) and received considerable media attention (see for example Bucik-Ozebek, 2017; Močnik, 2019; Vrabec, 2020). Almost immediately after its publication, the book raised questions about Medvešček's "invention" of the religious tradition (Hobsbawm, 2006 [1983]), as well as of the "imagined community" (Anderson, 1998 [1983]) which the author proclaimed as having been the bearer of this tradition (see, for example, Kozorog, 2020). Because of this, Medvešček's writings have also attracted considerable attention in museological, ethnological, anthropological, archaeological and humanistic circles (Skrtnar, 2014; 2018; Pleterski, 2015; Ravnik, 2017; Hrobat-Virloget, 2017; 2019; Toplak, 2018; 2019; Kozorog, 2020).

Even though Native Faith became known to the broader Slovene public with the writings of Pavel Medvešček, it was present before. The memory of the pre-Christian period is quite well reflected in modern Slovene culture. Pre-Christian mythical elements are not only hidden in Slovene literature but are to some extent still alive in the folk tradition. In addition to English Neopaganism (for example, Pan Pogan, Wicca), a fascination with the Celtic tradition, and with ancient African traditions, we can see a dynamic revival of Slavic pre-Christian beliefs at the beginning of the 21st Century. A group called the Heathens (*Ajdi*) was formed around 2005. At the same time, the Svetovid Parish of the Old Belief (*Staroverska župa Svetovid*) was formed, which operated with the Heathens under the common name Slovene Native Faith Believers, (*Slovenski staroverci*) (also later the Slovene Native Faith Association, *Društvo Slovenski staroverci*) (Črnič, 2012, pp. 240–249). In the 1980s began the formation of the Upasana community (*Svetovno nazorska kozmološka skupnost Upasana*). In 2008, Upasana's founding members submitted to the Office for Religious Communities the proposals for amendments to the Religious Freedom Act and prepared a complex process of "dealcoholicalisation" (*Dealkoholikatoizacija*). In 2013, Upasana registered as a religious community (*Svetovno nazorska kozmološka skupnost Upasana*, 2021). Today, the most visible among the groups/communities are Slovene Native Faith Association, the Slovene Native Faith Community of the Children of Triglav (*Slovenska rodnoverska skupnost "Otroci Triglava"*), Veles – Centre of Lifelong Learning, Personal Growth and Connection with Ancestors (*Veles – center vseživljenjskega učenja, osebne rasti in povezovanja s predniki*), and Matjar – Association for the Study of Posočje Naturalism (*Matjar – društvo za raziskovanje posoškega naravoverstva*). Along with Medvešček's writings, many other individuals have significantly influenced modern views on Native Faith (for example Čok, 2012; Sever, 2013; Omerzel, 2016).

Although these communities, groups, associations and individuals are now recognized among the Slovene public and are gaining in publicity, it is often pointed out by the believers of the Native Faith that for the most part people come to the meetings only because of some general interest, and they rarely actively participate for longer periods of time. Despite the fact that these groups

are gaining in importance, the feeling of marginalization was mentioned quite often while talking to my interlocutors from various Native Faith groups, associations and communities, or individuals who participate in the creation of these interpretations and receptions outside of the above-mentioned groups. Jurič⁹ is a member of the Matjar association. For Jurič, membership in the association represents above all the possibility of systematic research of the remnants of the Native Faith and sharing discoveries with other like-minded members. While expressing his dissatisfaction with the discourse on equal rights of all religious communities in Slovenia, he also expresses dissatisfaction with the political situation in Slovenia, which is perpetuating or allowing the perpetuation of the greater importance of some religious communities above others:

To some extent, of course, although I cannot ignore the observation that the current government clearly prefers certain religious groups, if I may say so, or religious practices. And that maybe some privileges were given to them, that's all. But yes, I would still say that it is secular, because religion is not included in education. But on the other hand, hey, the Ministry of Culture with its minister Simoniti¹⁰ [...] Talking about the restoration of frescoes [...] To date, they have financed 50 % of the project which you applied for themselves. When someone was applying, someone like Ana [another member of the Matjar association], for example, there was a minimal chance that you [would be] accepted because the Church has many such facilities that are in poor condition, [and] you did not [receive funding] because the Church had a monopoly. So, they got most of the money. You had to be lucky to get inside. That has now changed, because from now on the Ministry of Culture finances 100 % of the fresco restoration and it is no secret that when you look at who got the money, the vast majority goes to the Church. It is obvious that the rules have now been changed so that the funds go to the Church. Also, when the Episcopal Conference arbitrarily allowed the churches to open, you remember how it was that spring. That was a good indicator of who was wearing the trousers in the house. Although these trousers are sometimes in the form of priestly scarves. We are certainly secular because the Church does not have as much influence. They are certainly the most accessible and influential interest group in the spiritual realms, that's for sure. But [this is] understandable. After all this time, I think this is probably [true] everywhere where the population is mainly Catholic.

⁹ The names of some respondents and some information regarding their life and work have been changed in order to provide full anonymity. However, I chose not to anonymize Dr Gregor Lisjak, due to his former position as the Director of the Office for Religious Communities at the Ministry of Culture.

¹⁰ The conservative politician Dr. Vasko Simoniti has been the Minister of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia since March 2020.

These oppositions and negotiations also came to light when talking to Janez, a former self-proclaimed “new ager” and a prominent member of the Slovene Native Faith Association. Janez and the other members of his society practice the Native Faith and even call themselves Native Faith Believers (*Staroverci*), sometimes mixing it with spiritual knowledge obtained elsewhere. Furthermore, he actively participated in the Slovene independence movement during the 1990s, when, according to his narrations and writings, religious minorities played a role just as important as that of the Church. Therefore, he strongly condemns the current situation of religious minorities:

But we said we will talk about the state! What happens? The government, the colonial government of the Republic of Slovenia! Janša's government is no more and no less colonial than the ones of Šarec or Cerar. All three are identically submissive from the Vatican's point of view. Identically. They all go to pay homage to the colonial Church.

Janez directly points to the closing of the Office, which has attracted considerable attention in the wider laic and academic circles:

And now they have closed the Office. Cerar did nothing innovative. On the contrary, he mutilated it. Šarec just continued this mutilation, but they completed it. Let one student do a dissertation on what happened to the Office. What did the famous left and left-wing intellectuals do when the Republic of Slovenia's government abolished and for 10 years now have been abolishing religious freedom.

However, Janez was not the only one in my research sample that emphasized the problematics surrounding it. Tine is a member of Native Faith religious community called the Children of Triglav, and even if he was not aware of the changes at the Ministry of Culture before our meeting, he believes the message is clear – the closing of the Office could mean the end of democracy:

This is not democratic if we go for democracy. Hey, I am not going to say if there is only going to be one member of some religious thing [...] But when it comes down to it being a community that has a fairly large number of members, it can be a couple of thousand or whatever, and that is not right then. That means we go back to when only one religion will have the linen and scissors in its hands, which it already has quite a bit of, and then they can also suggest to their supporters, telling them “this will have to be abolished”. As in Russia, because Putin, formerly a communist, now goes to church because he knows he will benefit from it. And if this is going to happen to us, we have gone back to the Middle Ages or worse.

Like Tine, Iva was also not aware of the closing of the Office, but after receiving a brief summary stressed the importance of professional staff at the ministries who understand how certain bureaucratic changes can resonate in society:

I don't think it's fair, the professionals could handle these things. [...] To me, this seems purely misguided. And it is precisely for this reason that we should keep [the professionals], not only for religious communities, for every field, it is precisely this that makes sense to have them. And not bribed ones, but also differently thinking people that will allow broad-mindedness. So that there isn't some drivel at the end of it all and [it isn't] all about the money.

Even though Sašo is not an official member of any of the previously mentioned Native Faith groups or communities, he considers himself a believer. The closing of the Office does not bring major changes to the Slovene religious milieu, because to nature, it doesn't matter "whether the office is there or not. Two men and a fig tree (*laughs*). Nature doesn't care. The more it seems to me, for a man to whom nature means a lot, the more it makes sense to me to create an office for the protection of nature, not for the protection of religions." Jana, who is a fellow believer and is not an official member of any of the groups, also agrees with his opinion. She even points out that caution is needed when deciding to register a religious community, as they could be persecuted by the state in the future: "I think they will go against it, slowly. Against religious communities that act with too much autonomy." When I ask whether this applies to all non-Christian communities, Jana replies: "Yeah, or that they're not in someone's interest. It's about the people in these groups, [...] we're more important mentally or spiritually than physically. And they, for example, are aware of this, they also want to disable us, probably with all this that is happening now."

Janez also expresses a feeling of pressure from the side of the dominant religious institutions, especially from the leading Roman Catholic Church. In his narration, he also highlights a general lack of interest in religious pluralism, not just on the part of the current right-wing government:

If anyone tells me now that this government has closed the Office, I will tell you: where were you seven years ago, when the Office's closing began, when the staff began to shrink. The Vatican was just pushing. The nuncios see what is happening in Slovenia. The churches are empty, there are 53 registered religious communities, [...] now there are some Upasana, some Native Faith believers, and what else. There was always pressure, and they were always limiting us. There were no progressive moves.

Janez continues with his dissatisfaction and highlights the lack of understanding of the need for religious pluralism in a democracy. He mainly refers to the inappropriate conduct and a lack of understanding on the part of the current President of the Republic of Slovenia, Borut Pahor:

What did the President of the Republic of Slovenia, Borut Pahor, do in the week when the government closed the Office? What did he do? [...] The President of the Republic put a dot on this colonial, this gift of the Slovene colony to the Vatican. That week, when Simoniti

[Minister of Culture] shuttered the Office, Pahor went to visit the archbishop. Not the archbishop [visiting] him in the presidential palace. The president [visited] him at the archdiocese. They talked about consolidating relations between the colonial Church and the state, about open questions, which of course means [...] The next day you read in the news which property we returned to the Vatican. About how we will celebrate the 30th anniversary of [Slovenia's] independence. Borut Pahor did not protest the "depluralisation" of the sacred space with the archbishop. [...] That says it all. [He] did not call all religious communities and say "let's talk about the 30th anniversary of independence".

For Sašo, the Slovene state already sends a clear message regarding the equality of all religious groups by perpetuating Church holidays as public holidays: "Yes, if we write in the constitution that all religious communities are equal, then if we celebrate the Assumption of Mary, we could also celebrate the holidays of other religions, or we could learn about other religions in schools. If we say they are equal, of course." Jurij also notes the effect of education on religious pluralism and the importance of secularism in a democratic state. When asked whether Slovenian society is secular, he replies: "To some extent, of course, although I cannot ignore the observation that the current government very clearly prefers certain religious groups, if I may say so, or religious practices, and that maybe some privileges were given to them. [...] But yes, but I would still say that it is secular because religion is not included in education, for example."

Tine does not agree with this point of view. According to him, the Slovene state is far from secular, and the problem is that

[...] religions are also tied politically to certain parties, to the social system, capitalism, feudalism, [they go] hand in hand. We have members of political parties who are horrible Christians who steal and abuse. On the other hand, they are connected to the church, the main one in our country is, of course, the Roman Catholic Church. We cannot talk about a kind of secularism here, such as in France. Because in France, for example, churches are the property of the state, of the nation, because they were made by the nation, not the Church. They gave the money to build them. In Slovenia, we are still far from that. They get involved practically everywhere, even in economic matters. And if we look, we're not doing [...] some business. We remain strictly on some spiritual level, on a level of some thinking that is also a little philosophical. There is zero in our bank account. [...] But in general, not even a penny, it is no longer a religion. This is materialism, right.

Even though Jurij believes that the state is formally secular, he asserts that some things are nevertheless

[...] not so secular. Even then, when the Episcopal Conference arbitrarily allowed the churches to open, as you remember what it was like then in the spring. That was a good indicator of who was wearing the trousers in the house. Although these trousers are sometimes in the form of priestly scarves. We are certainly secular, however, because the Church does not have as much influence. They are certainly the most influential interest group in the spiritual realms, that's for sure. But this is understandable. After all this time, as I think this is probably true everywhere where the population is mostly Catholic.

The connection between the state and the Church also represents an important aspect in understanding the social situation for Jana. She believes that religious freedom *per se* does not exist in Slovenia, and this is due to the tradition that is deeply rooted in the practices of the Church. Also, Jana states that going to Church does not necessarily mean a person is a believer, he/she could just create his/her own image of God. She uses Catholic baptism as an example: "because in this way you show that you are spiritual. Anyway, if you're not now, I don't know; that you don't believe in that trinity, in the angels, in Mary and these things. Well, you have your own approach to God." According to her, the politics and the state are fully connected. Even more, the politics are merely an extension of religion (or in the Slovenian context, the Roman Catholic Church):

They are executors, yes. Executors of great rulers. Supposedly we vote for them, they are supposedly democratically elected, but our [political] system itself is such that you do not know who drinks and who pays. We vote for someone, but then there are completely different people in positions. I know what the system is like.

Even though she holds a similar opinion, Iva does not emphasize the connection between political parties and the state with the Church or with the current right-wing ruling party. She sees registered religious minority groups as a way of fighting for minimum rights, as the establishment of such free-thinking religious communities is generally not in line with politics (across all political orientations):

In general, it seems to me that politics is such that they like the last word on how things will be. And if you are now in a religious community and given that the Roman Catholic Church can afford many things, then so can others, because they are based on the same legislation [...]. It turns out like you're looking for a loophole in the system. That way, you can work more easily with the community. [...] It seems to me that they don't like it too much because it doesn't go through the national budget. You don't have as many of these contributions, you can do what you want, and that's just because you're registered as a religious community. That seems wrong to me. It seems to me that we should live in a country where these things should be

regulated, without these needs for legal-formal unifications. Simply because that's the situation, then ... It's easier if you join a religious community. At the same time, this 'religious' aspect is also lost a little bit, because it is not only based on beliefs, but on the fight for your basic rights. It can be such a broad debate.

As discussed above, Christian religion has lost its central position as a fundamental collective symbol of Western culture for numerous reasons (Hanegraaff, 2000, p. 302). Faith became more the domain of spirituality, with Christianity becoming just one of the many options in this ever-growing market of religion (Hanegraaff, 2000, pp. 302–303). Today, religions compete for their followers, and they can only do so by offering a wide range of spiritual services. Sašo observes that such structural changes are also in present Slovenian society, where the Church “no longer has the power it once had,” and various religious alternatives or minorities are now “considered competition, definitely.” Jurij adds that this could be a consequence of people's desire for change, and notes that with “some knowledge, but also with the change of lifestyle, of course, people are looking for other alternatives”. Even though this might be also true for Iva, she thinks that the Church still holds the monopoly,

as there are still many religious people in politics. Sometimes it's hard to avoid it. [...] Either way, this factor, everyone believes in something, after you are in a certain public position, you are essentially asserting your belief. You can argue with others, but you still decide based on your beliefs. You can't do this purely objectively, do such [public] work.

Jana agrees with Sašo and Iva, but in this regard emphasizes the disparities between the rural and urban areas. Her previous experience of living in the city, and now in the countryside, shows the difference in the reception of such alternative religious views: “Here where we live, I don't feel pressure, no. Not at all. And people too. People are here, a few other views than in the city. Because they live with nature. And it is very free all together. Many of these superstitions are also being introduced into the Church. Still.”

At present, there seems to be no great tension between the Native Faith communities and the Church. During the conversations, one of my interlocutors also confided in me that the retired Archbishop of Ljubljana, Cardinal Franc Rode, attended an exhibition on Native Faith held at the Museum of Gorica opened in 2014. It seems that the Church currently does not yet recognize them as competition, as this is in a way ensured by the numbers of followers entered in the register. For this reason, some of my interlocutors pointed out that it is also important to make the population aware of the possibilities of de-registration, as the Church justifies its monopoly in Slovene society based on its number of followers. Some of them have already decided to go through the process; Iva, Janez and Tine, for example, are already members of another

religious community. Jurij did not answer the question, while Jana is still registered as a member of the Church but is planning to leave it soon.

Conclusion

For some, secularism reflects the influences of Western theological modernization (Casanova, 1994), while for others, it primarily reflects the separation between private and public (Kaufmann, Goujon, & Skirbekk, 2011, p. 3). A general Western trend, the so-called “post-Christian” movement, introduced individualized spiritualities among young and educated individuals who simultaneously reject spiritual authority and conventional religious categories while promoting rationalist atheism and an immanent form of belief (Kaufmann, Goujon, & Skirbekk, 2011, p. 3; Houtman & Aupers, 2007; Taylor, 2007, pp. 507-516). Nevertheless, the presumptions of some of the most outstanding scholars of our times that secularism is an inevitable condition of modern society are being shown to be false. Society was once again misunderstood, with religion (in its reshaped form) coming back to the forefront of societal discussions in its full potential and showing no signs of decline.

The secular debate represents a field of struggle for legitimacy in society. Again, it is a place where macro-social, national, political, religious, ideological, and scientific discourses meet and potentially conflict with micro-community discourses in the struggle for power and the construction of religious/local identities (Ebstyne-King, 2003; Kapaló, 2013, pp. 2-5). As necessary, these discourses are reflected in the Slovene public sphere. The stories of the adherents, followers, and researchers of Native Faith are just a drop in the ocean of religious pluralism in Slovenia, which is often overlooked.

As I learned from the research, religious minorities are becoming stronger in Slovenia. However, their members believe that they still must fight for equal rights with some type of legal status. In the article, I have presented the opinions and views of individuals of only one religious branch, specifically believers or researchers of the Native Faith, sometimes also described as naturalism. The diversity of the interpretations of the Native Faith is reflected in the interlocutors' views on the closing of the Office for Religious Communities and the role of the state and the Church in strengthening secular values. Almost all the interlocutors believe that the closing of the Office for Religious Communities points to the fact that Slovenia is a secular state only in the legal/formal sense, while political changes indicate otherwise. Only Sašo expressed indifference to such debates. According to him, the Office does not play a major role in the religious debate. At the same time, almost all the interlocutors express dissatisfaction with the political situation in Slovenia. Most of them point out that the ruling right-wing party prioritizes and privileges the Roman Catholic Church,

since prominent members of the party are also devoted Catholics. In this context, only Iva points out that this is (to some extent) understandable and natural, as our personal religious beliefs also resonate in public life. She also stresses the importance of awareness among everyone about the background we come from. A partially negative attitude towards Church institutions can be perceived among all interlocutors, of course with varying degrees of intensity. The interlocutors also say that (so far) they have not had any major disputes with representatives of the Church. Nevertheless, some point out that this does not rule out the possibility that problems may still occur. Jana, for example, believes that politics is just an extension of Christian domination in the world, and one should be very careful about expressing religious affiliations, especially via the national religious register.

Supposing that religious rights are automatically applied to certain significant religious communities (and even among them there is usually just one place to reign), talking to members of other groups illustrates something else. We explored how religious minorities such as the Native Faith see the importance of discussing secularism, religious pluralism, equality, and equity in contemporary Slovene society. With their actions they can mitigate religions' general effect on forming them by a) de/registering as a religious community, b) addressing politicians, statesmen and stateswomen with open protest letters or other forms of expressing disagreement, c) raising public awareness of developments in the field of religious secularism and pluralism, as well as just being a constant reminder that our society is pluralistic, religiously diverse and thus rich in its history as well as in the present. The opinions of the interlocutors as to whether Slovenia is a secular state are coherent: even if Slovenia is a secular state by law, and addresses all religious communities as equals, it is equity we should be striving for. Despite many criticisms, however, the individuals do not show much interest in raising awareness of the different approaches of religious communities toward receiving state aid. Dr Lesjak also pointed out the general indifference on the part of religious communities. The only interlocutor who stressed his political activism and the importance of it was Janez.

This article has much room for improvement – its most significant shortcoming is the small number of interlocutors and the lack of an emic perspective, which is a consequence of the current COVID-19 health regulations. Despite all the shortcomings, the primary goal was to present Slovenia as a religiously heterogeneous space, show the importance of secularist debate, and highlight the issues that could be embedded into studies of secularist endeavours.

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RESIA – A SLAVIC ENCLAVE IN ITALY CULTURE AND RELIGION IN 19TH CENTURY TEXTS

NADIA CLEMENTE

Abstract: The paper describes a Slavic enclave living in the Resia Valley in Italy. These people speak an ancient Slavic language, which still preserves interesting archaic features and other elements of interest even today. The condition of marginalization has allowed the development and a maintenance of unique culture of songs, dances, oral traditions and religious sentiment reflected in the lexicon, with significant Resian invocations addressed to God. The Resians did not write and did not leave written records of their language and culture. Their knowledge was transmitted orally from generation to generation until the nineteenth century, when some writings appeared, few at the hands of the Resians of religious content, but more at the hands of Slavic travellers and scholars. The notable figures among them were Izmail I. Sreznevskij, a Russian Slavist, and Jan N. Baudouin de Courtenay, a Polish native, who came to Resia in 1841 and 1873 and studied and investigated the language and the rituals, values, beliefs, religious habits and stories of Resians, as he was interested in outlining and describing a half-known population. The religious sentiment of Resians was manifested through invocations to God, the construction of churches and votive chapels, participation in solemn festivities and religious literature in the Resian language. In the first place it was priests who over the centuries influenced culture and Resian society with different outcomes, depending on their background and training; it is also thanks to their contribution that, in recent times, steps have been taken to recover part of the religious songs handed down and to experiment with new translations of the sacred scriptures into Resian. Today, on the religious holiday of Saint Mary of the Assumption, there are solemn rites and collective dance which brings to mind the cathartic power.

Keywords: Resia Valley, religious ethnic traditions, Resia in 19th century texts

Introduction¹

Resia is an alpine valley, wedged for about 20 kilometres between the Alps and the Julian Pre-Alps (Fig. 1, 2 and 3), at the extreme north-eastern border of Italy. It is located in the Friuli area, and it is surrounded by high mountains, up to 2587 meters of the mountain massif of Mount Canin (Fig. 4), that I. I. Sreznevskij (1878) describes as “[a]ll form a high bulwark, lowering in some places and rising in others” (p. 7). In the main valley the inhabitants are distributed in the five hamlets: San Giorgio/Bila, Gniva/Njiva, Oseacco/ Osoána and Stolvizza/Sòlbiza), connected to minor settlements and gravitating around what is considered the capital, Prato di Resia/Rávanza. In a small adjacent valley, Uccéa/Učjá is only inhabited in the summer. The geographic conformation of the valley, closed on all sides, with the only and first carriage access, consisting of a road built in 1838 (Sreznevskij, 1878), has determined and conditioned the life and historical events of the valley, but at the same time has favoured the maintenance of traditions, songs, dances and unique language, derived from ancient Slavic, which still preserves interesting archaic features and various other elements of interest even today. There are less than one thousand Resian currently residing in the valley, but many live in other places in Italy and abroad, emigrating for work.



Fig. 1

Resia Valley - Panorama from west to east – photographer Daniele Buttolo

¹ The author would like to thank two anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments and helpful suggestions.



Fig. 2

*Resia Valley – Panorama from east to west (winter)
– photographer Daniele Buttolo*



Fig. 3

*Resia Valley – Stream Resia – Panorama from east to west
– photographer Daniele Buttolo*

The history of this small valley has not been written because such a small area does not attract the attention of historians, even if it deserves a dedicated study, and the rare information that exists, is found scattered in various archives. The official history of the Resians begins with the arrival of the Slavs in Friuli, documented by Paulus Diaconus (2007 [787–789 AD]) in *Historia Langobardorum* [History of the Lombards]. In Book IV, 28, he recounts that ‘Cacano’, King of the Avars, together with troops of his Slavic allies, invaded the Lombard Duchy of Cividale (year 610 AD); in Books V, 23 and VI, 45 he tells us about the invasion of the Slavs, the struggles of the Lombards to repel them from the Duchy of Cividale and finally how peace was made with them (about 730 AD).



Fig. 4

*Mount Sart (left) and the Canin massif area reflected in the Resia stream at sunset
– photographer Sandro Pavan*

In 1084 or 1085 the whole territory of Resia (Härtel R., 1985) became part of the “Dotation des Grafen Kazelin [Endowment of Count Kazelin] (p. 38) in favour of the foundling Abbey of Moggio, consecrated them in 1119. In those old documents, analyzed by Härtel R, the territory of Resia is mentioned in the years 1136, 1149, 1184 and 1228, in submission to the Abbot of Moggio, emis-

sary of the Patriarch of Aquileia, who administered the religious, jurisdictional and administrative power over a vast territory, including also Friuli. From 1420, the whole Marca del Friuli was conquered by the Republic of Venice, which deprived the Patriarch of Aquileia of the temporal authority. And, reading Nazzi F. (2008) we know that “In June 1420 Moggio, Chiusa, Resia e Resiutta agreed among themselves to make peace with Venice” (p. 641).

Later historical events are documented in schoolbooks of Italian’s history, because Resia has always participated in events in Friuli and Italy until the proclamation of the Kingdom of Italy (1866) and of the Italian Republic (1946). During the First and Second World Wars the territory of the Resia valley, even if surrounded by high mountains, was directly involved in combative acts, for the first time.

Resia and the Resians remained secluded and unknown to the Slavic world until at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the first reports of the Resians began to circulate in the specialized Slavic magazines of the time. J. N. Baudouin de Courtenay (1876) quotes: “Before I: Izmail I. Sreznevskij and Stanko Vraz, two Slavic travellers wrote about Resia and the Resians, the Polish count Jan Potocki and the Czech priest A. Píšely, former chaplain in the Austrian army” (p. 367). They compiled lists of Resian words, transcribed their impressions and varied information on the life, habits and customs of this semi-unknown people; the illustrious Slavist then lists the various publications that appeared in specialized magazines. Jan Potocki left the manuscript, with information about Resia, in the Ossolinski Library in Lviv. Izmail I. Sreznevskij published reports, noted during his visit to Resia in 1841, in *Žurnal Ministerstva* [Ministry periodical] (1841), *Moskvitjanin* [Muscovite] (1844) and in the book *Фріульські Славяне* [The Slavs of Friuli] (1878). Stanko Vraz published his observations in *Danica Ilirska* in 1841. Other scholars, such as Jernej Kopitar, Josef Dobrovský, Pavel Jozef Šafarik and Ján Kollar, did not visit Resia and commented on what Jan Potocki, Stanko Vraz and Izmail I. Sreznevskij had written. The first in-depth analysis of the Rezian language and culture is due to the studies of Jan N. Baudouin de Courtenay, who arrived in Resia in 1873. After this first publication the Slav world and Slavists came to know the Resians and began to take an interest in them.

Religious sentiment reflected in the lexicon

An important element of Resian cultural and social life has been the profound religiosity that characterized it. Religious sentiment is demonstrated by the remarkable number of churches built over the centuries: one in each major hamlet, one in each minor hamlet, as well as a large number of votive chapels (*máana*, they represented the church), scattered in the mountain stables (Fig.

5), and of crosses (*križa*) placed along the paths, in memory of more or less propitious events. The religious sentiment of the Resians is found in the participation in religious festivals, which will be discussed in the next chapter.



Fig. 5

Votive chapel – Màana – photograper Antonio Longhino - "ta na Osriže" 1894.

The religiosity of Resians is also proven by the infinity of daily expressions and exclamations, addressed to God our Lord. The invocations punctuate every moment of the day and reveal the invocation of a consoling help to pain, sadness and daily fatigue experienced in an isolated and disagreeable environment. Exclamations are still used today by those who speak Resian, more frequently by the elderly, but they do not represent an archaic lexicon; young people, on the other hand, targeted by a secularized culture, for the most part do not feel the consoling message of religion, as it was once felt. Many of these invocations are also reported in Baudouin de Courtenay's *Materialien I* [Materials 1st] (1895), which includes conversations he had with Resians during his stays in Resia, between 1873 and 1893.



Fig. 6
Resian Dance in Ucce/Učja

In the following list we summarize some significant Resian invocations, addressed to God:

Hôspu' Buh ("Lord God"); **šBughön** ("With God", a figurative farewell: "May God go with you"); **Böha-jimë** ("The name of God", meaning "Go in the name of God"; in response to *šBughän*, "alms"); **Böžjë jimë** ("The name of God", adj.); **Buh warje** ("God protect [us]"); **Buh ne dej** ("May God forbid", "That it does not happen"); **Buh dej no lehko nuć** ("May God grant a gentle night"; "Good night!"); **Buh-lunej** [singular], **Buhalunite** (with the formal you, "Lei" in Italian, "Thanks", "May God reward you", "Thank you!"); **Buh dej** ("May God grant", "I pray", in response to "Thank you", "That you have", a wish for prosperity); **Buh žeghne** ("May God bless", e.g., this food, pronounced at the table); **Buh wan žeghnej** ("May God bless you"²); **Buh ta posvite** ("May God enlighten you"); **Lodato su Kriste** ("Christ be praised", a welcoming greeting), from Italian "sia lodato Gesù Cristo"³); **sempre-s-lodatu** ("Always be praised", from Italian "sempre sia lodato", response to the above); **Buh wan dejte**

² Documented also by Baudouin de Courtenay (1895, p. 70).

³ *ibidem*, p. 193.

dobrö (“May God grant you good [things]”⁴); *ći Buh bo nän dal šdravjě* (“If God will grant us health”⁵); *Buh dej furtüno* (“May God grant fortune”⁶); *Buh pranase ta-prat waša dušiza* (“May God bring to [suffrage of] the souls [of your deceased]”, instead of “Thank you for what is offered”, e.g. even a coffee); *Buh pomaghej* (“May God help”); *Buh roka* (hands clasped); *Buh vi*⁷ (“God only knows”, “Who knows!”), *Buh bo vědel*⁷ (“God will know”, “Who knows!”), *Bohow-din* (“Sunday”, God’s day); *Bohow duh* (“Divine Spirit”); *Buh ka mü*⁸ (“At least one has it”, “Thanks be to God who has granted him”, e.g., a little well-being”); *Buh ka ti si došow* (“At least you have arrived”, “Thanks be to God”, e.g., that you have saved); *prošě Bōghü* (“Pray to God”, “Thanks be to God”, e.g., that you are safe); *šahwale Bōghü* (“You thank God”, e.g., that you have escaped danger); *betabuh* (“Poor him!”), expression of commiseration, from *batan Buh, “God martyred”, the miserable compared to Jesus/God martyred); *od Bōgha* (“From God”, “God sent”; *boghobare* (“Trouble”, from *bogho-bare*, ask God”; *barat*, “To ask”, “Appeal to God!”), e. g., in case of reckless and dangerous action); *bōghow* (“Divine”, adj.); *na to ime Bōgawo*, (“In the name of God”, “God willing!”); *bōholo* (“Rainbow”, from *bōhow lok*, “Divine bow”); *Bōgheć* (“Christ child”, diminutive of *Buh*); *bōghićow* (“Of Christ child’s”, adj.); *bōhawa rožü* (“Flower of Jesus”, *Hepatica nobilis*, *Anemone epatica*); *bōžjě* (“Godly”, adj.); *Bōžiuw Šapüved* (“Commandment”, “Precept of God”).

So far, these are expressions of praise or supplication to God our Lord, but Resian language also preserves archaic terms such as *ěro*, *jěro* (“priest”). This appellation confirms that the ecclesiastical hierarchy had been known in the Valley, since the early centuries, thanks to them the name *járo* or *áro* has remained, which in the texts of the Paleoslavian Canon is “иѣрѣи, иѣрѣи” = “priest”. (Cejtlin, Večerki, & Blagovoj, 1994, p. 278) This term represents a veritable linguistic treasure, many centuries old. But who brought this term to Resia? Unfortunately, due to the lack of written documents, this question remains unanswered.

The expression *Majna Valikü Nuć* (Chinese, 2003, p. 51) means “Pentecost”, literally “Easter May” or “Great Night of May”. The baptism of the catechumens, in this case of the Christianized Slavs, was imparted both the night

⁴ *ibidem*, p. 231.

⁵ *ibidem*, p. 233.

⁶ *ibidem*, p. 236.

⁷ By verb ‘*vědet*’ ‘to know’, present: *vin, viš, vi, vimō, vitä, vîö*; past: *vědel, vědalä, vědalo, vedali*.

⁸ It is invocation that corresponds to Russian “слава Бору!” [God be praised].

before Easter, and the night before Pentecost and its record has remained in the name *Majnä Valikä Nuć*.

It is interesting to note that in the Resian lexicon there is a continuous reference to God, recalled and praised from the morning greeting to the evening farewell. For centuries the morning greeting has been *śukrüstě* (“Jesus Christ”) and that of the evening, *śBughän* (“With God”), but during the nineteenth century habits changed. Why? We can speculate that the ideals of the French Revolution, including anti-clericalism, also reached Resia and, slowly during the 19th century, radically changed the perception of religiosity in the Resians. In this regard we have two important examples.

I. I. Sreznevsky (1878), who visited Resia in 1841, wrote his impressions:

the Resians (all Roman-Catholic) are very religious. In addition to the main church of the Assumption, there are still four in each of the main villages. The influence of the priest is extremely strong. Everyone considers him to be his master (*naš ghospôd* ‘our master’), and his every word is law (p. 12).

At the bottom of this annotation, J. N. Baudouin de Courtenay who came in Resia for the first time in 1873, added⁹:

Currently the influence of the priest is much less, now they do not call him "My master" at all. The common name for all priests is *jéro* or *éro* (in some villages south of Resia *jéro*), and then they distinguish the parish priest from the chaplain, etc. (Sreznevsky, 1878, p. 12).

J. N. Baudouin de Courtenay (1876) comments:

And since, in order not to offend the religious sentiments of the people among whom I had to return again, I tried to carry on these religious customs, and, for example, in the case indicated, at least I took off my hat, the Resians 'the most liberal of people' looked at me with eyes that showed wonder why “un professore [a professor]”¹⁰ could be “so backward” as to follow practices that are suitable for at most, the old and women but not of a modern, cultured person (p. 288).

Many years, almost 180 have passed, since the attachment to religion began to decline among Resians, but their lexicon has maintained a reflection of religious sentiment.

⁹ Sreznevskij (1878, p. 2) points out that all the notes are by J. N. Baudouin de Courtenay.

¹⁰ In Italian.

Religious festivities

To express religiosity, the Resians developed, over the course of history, a series of rituals and solemn religious feasts were celebrated with collective songs and dances on the side-lines of great celebrations.

In Resia the most important festival is the *Šmarnamiša*, which occurs on the August holiday in honour of Saint Mary of the Assumption (celebrated on August 15), the Patroness of Resia. The term derives from **SvetaMarijna Miša* > *Šmarnamiša*. On that day all the Resians converge in Prato di Resia/*Rávanza*, where solemn religious rites take place, and a traditional large market is held. It is a day of celebration, which attracts emigrants who are not resident to the Valley, for work reasons or in other regions of Italy and in Europe (Baudouin de Courtenay, 1876, pp. 274-275).

Solemn celebrations are still held in every hamlet in honour of the patron saints. These are the feasts described by I. I. Sreznevskij (1878, pp. 12-13):

The 1st of May, *Majnek*, is the feast for the dedication of the Church of Saint Mary of Assumption. Once there were great parties, but now, at least in Prato, there are no dances, no music and no songs. Each town has the feast of the patron saint, in particular in *Oseacco / Osoane*, they celebrate San Vito and in San Giorgio/*Bila* they celebrate San Giorgio. On the occasion of the latter's feast, once the patron saint of all the Resians, the image of the saint was carried in procession in all the hamlets of the valley and in each one there was dancing, singing and drinking wine. The songs continued until evening, when the image was brought back to his church and all the celebrations ended at the stroke of midnight, with a prayer sung to the saint.

Even today, on the occasion of the feast of the patron saint, in each hamlet, takes place also a rite that dates back to very ancient times, the “change of the *Čamarár*”. He is elected annually from among the parishioners, to collect the donations necessary for the maintenance of the church; on this occasion the old *Čamarár* entrusts the task, symbolized by a silver box (Fig. 7), to the new person in charge. In the silver box is the tobacco that the Cameraro offers (a pinch) in exchange for money.

Priests have had a great influence on the social and cultural life of Resians, both positively and negatively. Recalling the visit to the valley in 1841, I. I. Sreznevskij (1878) writes:

The priests tried to dissuade the people from singing and they succeeded. The popular songs are almost all forgotten, and, in their place, they sing “Friulian arias”. The few that remain have strange melodies, of the kind of the ritual and wedding songs of the southern Russians (p.13).



Fig. 7

The silver box of Stolvizza/Solbiza's church.

At this news I. N. Baudouin de Courtenay, replied: “The priest now does not forbid the Resians from singing or dancing and even if he forbade it, no one would listen to him” (Sreznevskij, 1878, p. 14, footnote).

The habit of collective dance, still alive today in Resia, brings to mind the cathartic power of dance which suggests the image of ritual celebrations and the liberating effect it has on those who indulge in it. In ancient times (Fig. 6) and also nowadays, dances accompanied important and solemn occasions.

E. Adaiewsky ([1883] 2012)¹¹ describes the Resian dance and music: “While they dance, they never touch hands, it is a continuous cross step, while walking the women turn once or twice on themselves and then find themselves side by side” (p. 133). And on the subject of the musical rhythm, she notes:

To our great surprise, and in the most unexpected way, we found this peonio rhythm alive in the midst of this Slavic people for which it constitutes the constant musical metric norm. ... We can say that Resian music occupies, in the popular music of the Slavic peoples, the same independent and particular position of their language among the other Slavic dialects (p. 137).

First records of written Resian and the oral tradition

The Resian language and culture have been handed down only orally and the first writings in Resian, redacted for practical purposes, were compiled by priests in order to spread Christian teachings among young people and adults.

The first of the writings composed in Resian is the *Libri od luzi nebesche* [Book of heavenly light] or *Resian Catechism* written by priest Francesco Domenico Micelli (1797), handed down to us thanks to the interest of J. N. Baudouin de Courtenay who received it and published in 1875. It was supplemented by a vocabulary, with comments and notes in Russian in an appendix to the *Опыт фонетики резьянских говоров* [Phonetics essay of the Resian speaks] (1875). The text contains the “Christian doctrine” taught to children, the main prayers, the Commandments and Christian teachings. It is a first attempt at writing in Resian. Its predominant graphic system is Italian and straight from the first lines you can see the notable interference of the romance lexicon.

The second text written in Resian is *Christjanske Uzshilo* [Christian teaching]. It is a collection of twenty-four sermons on seven Sacraments, addressed to the faithful especially adults, and read during Sunday or festive services from 1845 to 1850. The original manuscript was donated to J. N. Baudouin de Courtenay and published by him in 1913 as “Resian monument”,

¹¹ E. Adaiewsky wrote a book in 1883 which was published posthumously in 2012.

accompanied by notes and insights in German. The illustrious Slavist Jan Baudouin de Courtenay acknowledges that *Christianske Uzhilo* reflects the pure Resian language, with “Italianisms and Slovenianisms certainly foreign to the current language” (Courtenay, 1875, p. 118). From a first reading we immediately grasp the linguistic competence, both morphological and lexical, we appreciate the neologisms and the ability to turn, or to put it better, to regenerate the concepts and principles of Christian teaching in the Resian language. Unlike the first text taken into consideration, a philological study of the greatest interest on the Resian language can be developed through the analysis of *Christjanske Uzhilo*. The author, or rather the authors, are Don Odorico Buttolo and Don Francesco Galizia (p. 113); furthermore, the text is not a translation from an Italian original, but an original work (p. 142).

Christjanske Uzhilo.

1

Uláhagne h' Uzhílu Christjánskimu.

Buh nas je creál, sa uójo da mi ha snáimo, amáimo, serviáimo 2
na ifsén svítu, anù da mi ha ushíuaimó sa nemér tu Paravíshe. na 25 Májja 1845.

Zhe vi víta tadéi, po kírí póti mamó dosézh ifsó? Sa dosézh 3
ifsó mamó dárshat te svéte míttelne, ki Buh nan je dal: to príde
rezhít, mamó dárshat to svéto Christjánsko Dottríno, ki Iésus Chrí-
stus nan je dal skuóse gnehá svéto uzhílo.

Ma káku móre dárshat te Bóshje míttelne ití, ki jih ne sna? 4
Káku móre dárshat to svéto Christjánsko Dottríno, ití ki je ne
umj, anù ki je ne intendá? Ia crédinan, da vi ushè od máleha
horè sta se jo náuzhili: ma pur ja se bojin, da muzh ih je, ki so
sábili kíro besído; muzh ih je, ki umijo Dottríno mákoi smútiemo;
muzh ih je, ki je ne intindájo; anù magári tákoi ne, ki dni cert
ne umijo níkar.

Sa uójo ifsohá ja zhion lítus hlabokó anù na tínkin uan od- 5
prít, anù spiegát Christjánsko Dottríno, da po iséi póti vi moréita
jo intendát, anù jo dárshat skrágneno, anù itadéi snat Bóha, amát
Bóha, serviát Bóhu na ifsén svítu, anù ha ushíuat sa lemér tu
Paravíshe.

Ne stúita se zhúdit, ki ifsó uzhílo uan parjá dna nóva rizh; 6
pokai ki vi matá védet, da itáku dílajo tu usáki Paróchj, itáku

Analysing the seven sacraments, the priest exhorted the Resians to profess the teaching of the Christian faith, at times he harshly criticized them because they did not prove themselves sufficiently devoted. Through the reading of sermons, we can imagine the life of the Resians, their strengths and weaknesses; it turns out that in those years the Resians did not have a good knowledge of Catholic teachings and there were also those who ignored Christian duties. In the sequence of the Sacraments, the priest dwelt a lot on Confession, Marriage and the role of parents.

The publication of the *Christjanske Uzhilo* was a lucky event for the Resians, who would have thanked J. N. Baudouin de Courtenay if they could read that precious document today.

The Resians have also preserved an oral tradition that refers to the religious literature composed of stories (*praviza*), songs (*wiža*) and prayers (*rizjúne*). The central theme of this trend is salvation, to be achieved through continuous prayer, penance, fasting and suffering. One of the texts echoes the Legend of St. Alessio (Baudouin de Courtenay, 1895, pp. 114-123, 123-132) in Resian *San Dalešjo*, presumably from the Latin form “(Vita) Sancti Alexii”; it belongs to both Latin and Polish religious literature.

Another interesting passage is the legend of St. David, *Sveti Sinti Láudec*, from the diminutive *Davidec*. He is a fervent Christian capable, even if small, of rejecting the flattery of the Goliath-Demon and for this reason he is allowed, while still alive, to visit Hell. Among the damned, *Sveti Sinti Laudec* finds his parents and his two brothers and asks them the reason for the eternal punishment and, after hearing their confession, he takes them all to Heaven. In this story, eternal salvation is achieved through “Confession”.

The line of religious literature in Resian also includes songs, among which there are two interesting ones - *Běšě Mate ta pod križon* (“Stabat Mater”) and *Sodni din* (“the Judgment Day”); they are still sung today in the churches of Resia, on the occasion of solemn feasts.

These two texts, with others, have been collected in a booklet (*Libro dei Canti* [Book of the songs], edited by Parish of S. Maria Assunta, 1999) and were taken from Roberto Frisano’s degree thesis (a.a. 1995-1996). He told me:

The Resian religious songs, that we can document, were probably spread from the end of the eighteenth century. A small group is made up of Resian versions of psalms, the Latin *Dies irae* and the *Magnificat* (with melodies reminiscent of the Gregorian ones or the “patriarchine” versions used in Friuli). Another group consists of catechetical songs or devotional songs, which were probably invented by some priest, always between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

We transcribe¹² them below:

BĚŠĚ MATE TA POD KRIŽON – STABAT MATER

Sveta Mate vi sprusitě, tu-w našě sěrzě se šaprijtě plaje od Ježuš Kristuša.

1. Běšě Mate ta pod križon ta-w dulörjě rat na jöčě vidět Bōga ubišana.

2. Nji dušiza pa sa mimbra, karje tožna nu pa šmáltrana, skuša sablo šbozana.

3. Kako tožna nu punišna, na je stala Mati Sveta, Mate Sina Ježuša.

4. Ne se tožase nu pa mimbrase, döbra Mati, köj ša videt pene od Sina Bōžjaha.

5. Se udjōčěj wsake žwot, köj ša vidět Mate Boga ta-w ti vilikě spažiměn.

6. Pa sa smilne wsaka dūša, vidět Mate našaha Kristuša pätět maltre od Ježuša.

7. Ša wse hrihe od judjame pätěl Ježuš ta-w tormintah odkärvävět od hējžleh.

8. Vidět sviha dolč Sina, pomorjoč sam ta-na križo, dardo šadnjě spažēm.

9. Mate pručä wsěn dušizan, ša dubruto od teh sulšěn pa mi bomö udjōkaně.

10. Ša dubruto od Svete Mate, vi möj Buh sěrcě šavjite ša limer šis wame.

11. Ša ta žihněn Sin ka mwär, vibirijta wse te maltre, kar tuliko teškö an pätěl.

12. Ta-na križon smilně utožän waše šdiljane wse maltre, ša wso vito ša limer.

13. Stat šis wame Sveta Mate, stat šis wame ta-pod križon, ša no jtako vliko maltro.

14. Ko ma dušiza žwöt šapüste, šdělajtě ša rude danö to nēbēsko gloriyo.

THE MOTHER WAS UNDER THE CROSS – STABAT MATER

Holy Mother we pray you, in our heart here close the wounds of Jesus Christ.

1. The Mother was under the cross, in too much pain she cries to see God hanging.

¹² We transcribe them, with spelling adaptation by the editor.

-
2. His soul also groans, very sad and painful, pierced by the sword.
 3. How sad and dejected was the Holy Mother, the Mother of the Son Jesus.
 4. She was saddened and groaned, the good Mother, to see the pains of her Son Jesus.
 5. Every person is saddened, by seeing the Mother of God, in pangs.
 6. And every soul takes pity on seeing the Mother of our Christ endure the sufferings of Jesus.
 7. Because of all the sins of the people, Jesus suffered in torments due to the bleeding lashes.
 8. See your sweet Son, dying abandoned on the cross, to the last agony.
 9. Mother help all souls, for the goodness of those tears, we too will be weeping.
 10. By the goodness of the Holy Mother, to you my God we bind our heart forever to you.
 11. For the blessed Son who died, take all the sufferings which He endured so strongly.
 12. On the humbly contrite cross, all your sufferings shared, for all your life forever.
 13. To be with you Holy Mother, to be with you under the cross, for such a great suffering.
 14. When my soul leaves the body, let heavenly glory be given forever.

SODNJE DIN, TE DIN NA SODNJE

Sodnje din, te din na sodnje, gori svit anu vse reče, pravi David nu Sibila.

Smrt se čude nu natura, wsak wstane kar je ta ura, rispundet čes vse sve hrihe.

Koj tadj an ma rečet bušaz, ko pa to još jistes se skrije, takoj rišnik se odkrije.

Krej od strašne maestade, vi salvawate šis wašo gračijo, salvejti nas šis wašo dubruto.

Mili Ježuš spomanuwti se, je si hauža sve pasjune, vaše gračije, vaše pardune.

Ša nas iskat ste se strudel, š'teškin križon sti nas vikupel, wsaka stanta, na bo prašna.

Ćudikat čes vse ofeše, nahejte dolo te još vendete, pred tin dnje od te raziune.

Vi Marijo ste rišveselel, tu-w ladruna ste polednol, anu mle sti dal špirančo.

Slatko pas Buh šinkajt ten dušizan, ta sveta luč jin svite ša limer tuw paraviže. Itako to bode.

JUDGMENT DAY

Day of judgment, the day of judgment, the world and all things blaze, David and Sibyl tell us.

Death and nature are amazed, everyone will rise again when that hour comes to answer for all their sins.

What then can say poor, when even the righteous will hide, while the sinner will reveal himself.

Majestic terrible king, save yourselves with your grace, save us with your goodness.

Benign Jesus, I am guilty of my passions, remember your grace and your forgiveness.

You are exhausted seeking us, with the heavy cross you have redeemed us, all troubles will be in vain.

When you judge all the sins, omit the just vengeance, before the day of reckoning.

You rejoiced Mary, you looked towards the thieves, and you give me hope.

God give a sweet peace to those souls, a holy light luminate them forever in Paradise.

So be it.

Nowadays

We have read that priests with their strong influence have often discouraged the perpetuation of ancient customs. However, in the last 30 – 40 years they have encouraged the use of the Resian language in the liturgy and encouraged the translation of the Gospels into Resian. It was demanding and commendable work. To appreciate their value, we transcribe one of the passages that appeared in the Parish Bulletin of Resia *Pod Tjanynowo sinco* (“In the shadow of the Canin”, Summer 1981).

ŠMARNAMIŠA

Je se woğial Bogow santuari ta-w nebe anu ta-w santuaru je se po-kašala Arka wod šaveše.

Tadij ta-w nebe je se pokašal din privliki sanjál: na žana woblačaná taj sunze, šis luno tapod nogami, na ie mela tana glavi no karono šis dwanist šwišdow. Na nusila anu na ie wojmekala ša puvit.

Tadij ta-w nebe dušil din drugi sanjal: na privlika dišmirina čarnjela šis sedan glavow anu desat rogow; ta-na glawan na ie mela sedan krajovski karonow.

Šis nji repon na tešala no tretnjo part wod wse šwišdow ki so bile ta-w nebe anu na je šmirkala dolu na jise swit.

Te brau wod te dišmirine se gal taprit to žano ki puwiala ša ji snest utručića, apena našinan. Žana powila dnoga sinića distinan kwažuwat vis čistu swit šis to močno jawrawo palizo. Jise sinić an je bil napret wšet wod Boga, anu gan ta-prit njaga tron.

Žana bwižala ta-w to same mestu ka to ni wod nikogor, itu ki Buh je bil paraćal no streho.

Tadij ta-w nebe sa ćul din móćni glas ka pul: “Njan je se naredel salvanust, moćnust, krajuwska wod našaga Boga, anu njaga moćne kwazanje wod njaga Christuša.

Ta-w Librinu wod Apocalisse, 11,19; 12,1-6a. 10a-b (Traduzione di Maria Di Lenardo Barbarino)

Edited by Author in: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KTFFasz-tMc>

MASS OF SAINT MARY OF THE ASSUMPTION

The sanctuary of God opened in heaven and the Ark of the covenant appeared in the sanctuary. Then a great sign appeared in the sky, a woman dressed in the sun, with the moon under her feet, had a crown of twelve stars on her head. She was pregnant and was crying out in labour pains.

Then another sign appeared in the sky, a huge red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns; on his head he had seven diadems.

It dragged a third of the stars that were in the sky with its tail and they fell to earth. That dragon beast stood before the woman giving birth to devour the newborn child. The woman gave birth to a male child destined to rule the whole world with the golden sceptre. The child was immediately taken by God and placed before his throne.

The woman fled to desert (since there is no term, described so: a solitary place that belongs to no one), where God had prepared a shelter for her.

Then a great voice was heard in heaven singing. Now salvation has been accomplished, the strength and the kingdom of our God, and an imperious order of his Christ.

(From the Book of Revelation, 11:19; 12.1-6; 12.10. Translation by Maria Di Lenardo Barbarino).

Conclusion

Throughout history, Resians have never been subjected to a noble feudal lord, who could have given them a particular cultural imprint. From the first settlement in the Valley – in the eighth century – until the end of the last war, they have had the priest, as the only authority of referral, recognized in the past as “Our Lord”. Following the influence of priests and their teachings, Resians have developed a culture, a tradition, a religious sentiment and a literature, which has come down to us.

The priests, over the centuries, were of different extraction and origins, related to their times. In 1242 “magistri uolrici de resia” (Härtel, 1985, p. 127) is witnessed and in 1339 we find “plebano Rayner”¹³ in the “ecclesie sancte Marie de Resia”. Both priests were of German origin. They were sent by the Patriarchate of Aquileia, the city where the court and the clergy including the Patriarch were of German extraction and nomination (Leicht, 1915). The election of the Patriarch had to have the approval of the Emperor an ally in Friulian territory; subsequently, the Pope of Rome expected and managed to claim the right of control over the his election and slowly, over the centuries, the clergy of Friuli.

Due to the particularity of their language, Resians still had the right to have a priest who knew Resian or a Slavic language. Jan Baudouin de Courtenay (1876) quotes don Andrea Coss of Gniva/*Njiva*. Around 1790, Don Giovanni Micelli of Gniva / *Njiva* and the vicar Antonio Brida of Stolvizza / *Solbiza* hosted Jan Potocki (p. 363). In 1841 Don Odorico Buttolo of Stolvizza / *Solbiza* hosted I. I. Sreznevskij (1878).

The clergy had a great influence on Resian culture, here we report again some observations of scholars, who arrived to Resia in the nineteenth century. Jan Baudouin de Courtenay (1876) notes:

As I had occasion to note, the main agents in part of Friulanization and in general of Romanization of the Slavs of northern Italy showed themselves to be Roman-Catholic priests... Resians pray in Resian, but they sing in the church and during the processions in Latin, certainly they don't even mean a word. ... As some assured me, the children are also taught the catechism in Resian (p. 295-296).

Sreznevskij (1878, p. 5) notes the words of Don Odorico Buttolo: “How-ever singing is not good – he observed: we must pray to God, not sing”.

After the experience of the first books written in Resian by priests, we have only one example of book-doctrine in Resian written by Don Giuseppe Kramaro (1927). Then priests in the next decades spoke only Italian but, fortunately,

¹³ Parish Bulletin of Resia “*Pod Tjanynowo sinco* [In the shadow of the Canin] – Summer 1981.

some were committed to support the recovery and enhancement of religious songs, and not only through the pages of the Parish Bulletin. Despite these ups and downs, Resians have preserved their own identity, language and culture in Resian that is both profane and religious, up to the present day; however, they face a risk to be overwhelmed by the preponderance of Italian culture and the current globalization process.

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Appendix. The Resian language

To complete this presentation of Resian culture, we give a brief mention to the language and in particular on the variants.

The Resian language reflects a rural society which, also due to its limited territory, has not had the same development as other major Slavic languages, it was not used in written form, with the exception of rare cases due to the commitment of priests for the dissemination of Christian doctrine. To date, there is no orthography of Resian that is shared by all; there are various reasons for this gap, one of them is the fact that Resians do not study their own language and literacy is taught in Italian. Italian orthography is not suitable for fully representing the Resian language due to the absence of some indispensable graphic symbols, moreover, this difficulty is also due to the scarcity of written documents which, if they had been more numerous and widespread, could have guided a participatory orthography. Finally, the absence of a shared orthography is also complicated by the presence of the variants.

Here we want to demonstrate the peculiarities of Resian, presenting the incidence of vowels in the language:

RESIAN'S VARIANTS				
	<i>Bilä/San Giorgio</i>	<i>Njiwa/Gniva</i>	<i>Osoánä/Oseacco</i>	<i>Sólbizä/Stolvizza</i>
dog	<i>pīs</i>	<i>pas</i>	<i>päs</i>	<i>pes</i>
village	<i>vīs</i>	<i>vas</i>	<i>väs</i>	<i>ves</i>
big	<i>vlik</i>	<i>vilék</i>	<i>valék</i>	<i>valók</i>
window	<i>woknō</i>	<i>uknō</i>	<i>oknō</i>	<i>oknō</i>
lunch	<i>wobēt</i>	<i>ubēd</i>	<i>obēt</i>	<i>obēt</i>
cloud	<i>woblak</i>	<i>öblak</i>	<i>öbläk</i>	<i>öbläk</i>
leg	<i>noga</i>	<i>nōgha</i>	<i>nōghä</i>	<i>nōa</i>
sir	<i>góspuť</i>	<i>ghóspot</i>	<i>ghóspuť</i>	<i>óspot</i>
rich	<i>bogat</i>	<i>boghat</i>	<i>boghät</i>	<i>boét</i>
mount	<i>gora</i>	<i>ghōra</i>	<i>ghōrä</i>	<i>ōra</i>
fire	<i>ogonj</i>	<i>oghònj</i>	<i>oghònj</i>	<i>oònj</i>
to go	<i>jīt</i>	<i>tet</i>	<i>tet</i>	<i>tôt</i>
went	<i>šel</i>	<i>šal</i>	<i>šow</i>	<i>šel</i>
ate	<i>ídel</i>	<i>ídal</i>	<i>íduw</i>	<i>jídel</i>
looked	<i>gledal</i>	<i>hledal</i>	<i>ghléduw</i>	<i>ledel</i>
egg	<i>jājzě</i>	<i>jajze</i>	<i>izě</i>	<i>jajzě</i>
tree	<i>jarböl</i>	<i>harbol</i>	<i>arbuw</i>	<i>arbol</i>
hole	<i>jáma</i>	<i>jeme</i>	<i>ámä</i>	<i>joma</i>
air	<i>jajēr</i>	<i>ajer</i>	<i>áär</i>	<i>ájär</i>
oil	<i>öjē</i>	<i>öjē</i>	<i>óē</i>	<i>öjē</i>

Baudouin has thoroughly analysed the variants of the Resian language and illustrated them in his *Опыт фонетики резьянских говоров* [Phonetic essay of the Resian dialects] (1875a, pp. 112-115), paragraphs from 284 to 289.

In this article the Resian invocations reflect the characteristics of the speech of Oseacco/*Osoana*, spoken by the author. Special symbols used in this article to transcribe Resian correspond to *Introduction to the Resian Language* (Clemente, 2020).

Graphic symbol	pronunciation	International phonetic alphabet
č	like ‘church’ in English	voiceless Postalveolar affricate č
ć		voiceless palatal occlusiv ć
ǰ	Like ‘just’ in English	voiced postalveolar affricate ǰ
ǰ	Similar to Scottish ‘jar’	voiced palatal occlusiv ǰ

Graphic symbol	pronunciation	International phonetic alphabet
gh	Like the Spanish 'trigo'	voiced velar fricative ɣ
nj	Similar to 'nuisance' in English	nasal palatal ɲ
š	Like 'shoe' in English	Voiceless postalveolar fricative ʃ
ś	like 'rose' in English	Voiceless postalveolar fricative ʂ
w	like 'witch' in English	voiced labio-velar approximant w
z		voiceless alveolar affricate ʈ
ž	like 'television' in English	Voiced postalveolar fricative ʐ
ä		cupped
For the following vowels reference is made to the explanations of Baudouin de Courtenay (1875a, pp. 5-6, § 13)		
ë		With the median opening between the positions of the oral cavity for e and that for o , but closer to the position for e than that for o with the opening of approximately German ö or French eu
ö	As the French eu	
ï	As the Russian ы	With the opening of the vowel i , obtained by approaching the back of the tongue and the palate, or by opening the Russian ы
ü	As the German 'über'	With the opening of the German ü or, more precisely, the French u

FIELD DIARIES, EMOTIONS, SUBJECTIVITY, AND THEIR ROLE IN ANTHROPOLOGICAL RESEARCH

MICHAL UHRIN

Abstract: The question of objectivity and subjectivity of anthropological research has been prominent in academic discourse since the second half of the 20th century. The article aims to contribute to debates on objectivity and subjectivity in anthropological and ethnographic research. Specifically, the author addresses the issue of how to deal with personal feelings and emotions that researchers encounter during field research. The author tackles the methodological and epistemological aspects of ethnographic research associated with using personal experiences, feelings, and emotions as ethnographic data. These issues are considered in the context of research of religion. In conclusion, the author expresses the view that personal experiences, feelings, and emotions should not be perceived as equivalent to data obtained by the scientific method. Despite this, they play an important role in the process of writing ethnography.

Keywords: objectivity, subjectivity, field research, ethnography, field notes, diary.

Introduction¹

During the anthropological research of religion and supernatural beliefs, researchers often encounter different worldviews. On a personal level, such contact frequently evokes emotional and subjective responses. In this essay, I will address the question of how the individual experiences, feelings, personality of researcher, and emotions experienced by anthropologists during field

¹ This text was created as output within the grant project MŠ SR VEGA n. 2/0102/19 *Kolektívne rituály ako nástroj sociálnej regulácie*. [Collective rituals as a mechanism of social regulation].

research, affect the research and results of the research. It is especially important to reflect on these issues in the context of the study of religion since religion has a significant impact on the lives of individuals and groups. I also believe that every anthropologist or ethnographer has dealt with this issue at some stage during his career. In this essay, I will outline how I approached these methodological problems of ethnographic research.

On the example of my ethnographic research aimed at religion, I will illustrate how ethnographers can approach one's own emotions during field research. From the methodological point of view, I will suggest the role that the personal feelings and emotions of a researcher can play in the process of writing ethnography (the results of field research and subsequent analysis of data). My aim is not to give definitive answers. I would only like to present "my answers" to the question of "subjectivity versus objectivity" corresponding with the positivist, naturalistic, and materialist model of science (e.g., Boyer, 1990, 2001, 2003, 2011; D'Andrade, 1995; Lett, 1997a; Sperber, 1996, 2011). I argue that personal experiences, feelings, and emotions should not be perceived as equivalent to data obtained by scientific methods. Despite this, they can't be ignored and have an important role in ethnographic research.

Before proceeding further, it is necessary to point out that the term ethnography can bear at least two meanings. First, ethnography (ethnographic research) can be considered as a research method that is characterized by systematic collection of empirical data, especially through the methods of participant observation and ethnographic interview (Berg, 2001, p. 139). Ethnographies are also the final product of systematic data collection and subsequent analysis. They are a comprehensive description of socio-cultural phenomena and societies. When I am referring to ethnography as a result of ethnographic research, it is written in italics.

Crisis of representations and postmodern anthropology

In the early stages of anthropological research, anthropologists generally did not question whether their description of diverse cultures is an objective description of socio-cultural phenomena. This question came to the wider attention in the second half of the twentieth century. Interest in it is associated with various important moments in the history of anthropology and scientific research in general: the crisis of representations; the rise of interpretive anthropology, symbolic anthropology, and postmodernism in the social sciences and humanities, and publication of personal notes from Bronislaw Malinowski's

field research in the late 1960s. In the following pages, I discuss selected issues from these moments related to the topic of the essay.²

During the fifties and sixties of the twentieth century, it was gradually becoming clear, that the same cultural phenomena can be interpreted and analysed by two anthropologists in opposite ways. This period in anthropology is called the crisis of representations. Questions related to the objectivity of ethnographic research, as well as its epistemological or ontological foundations, gradually began to open (e.g., Bužeková, 2012, 2018; Bužeková & Jerotijević, 2012; Freeman, 1983; Holmes, 1957; Lewis, 1951; Mead, 1928; Redfield, 1930).

It was during this period when symbolic and interpretative approaches to the study of cultures begin to form in cultural and social anthropology. Contemporary postmodern and interpretive anthropology has been influenced by the ideas of the doyen of symbolic and interpretative anthropology such as Clifford Geertz, David Schneider, Victor W. Turner, or Mary Douglas (e.g., Turner, 1985). Interpretative anthropology is characterized by the aim to describe and understand cultures and societies "from within" – i.e., from the native's point of view.

The ideas of interpretative anthropology had significant impact on the postmodernism. One of the main characteristics of postmodernism is the critique of history, research methods, ethics, theories of socio-cultural anthropology, and the results it has achieved so far (Caplan, 2003). Postmodernism generally perceives science and the scientific method as a product of ideology set in a specific cultural context and identifies it with the domination of "the west" and oppression of the "others". Their aim is not to create universally valid, coherent, and falsifiable scientific theories (Kanovský, 2002, p. 171). For example, Clifford Geertz did not consider the study of culture to be an experimental science explaining laws of causation, but an interpretive science explaining meanings ascribed to cultural practices.

Anthropologists inspired by Geertz consider sociocultural anthropology to be part of humanities – the study of art, literature, dance, architecture, philosophy, and many other forms of human creative activities. Postmodern anthropologist emphasizes the author's emotions, subjective feelings, creativity. These principles of postmodernism have also been applied in the anthropological re-

² I would like to emphasize that the list is incomplete in a sense. The second cognitive revolution as well as one of the oldest questions in anthropology ("Is anthropology science or a part of humanities?") are also related to the topic of the essay. Also, I do not address the second cognitive revolution and will deal with questions regarding the nature of anthropology only marginally. In the context of this essay, it is sufficient to point out that postmodern anthropologists consider anthropology to be a part of humanities. From this perspective, anthropology should not be subjected to the rules and principles of the positivist, materialist, and naturalistic scientific research (for discussion see Beaulieu, 2004; Bužeková, 2012, 2018; Carrithers, 1990; Gellner, 1992; Lett, 1997a, 1997b; Marcus & Fischer, 1999; Spiro, 1996).

search of religion. As we will see in the following section, in several cases, these ideas resulted in research strategies such as going native or subjective soaking.

Going native, subjective soaking and research of religion

Some postmodern and interpretive anthropologists let themselves to be fully involved in the activities of the studied societies. They try to convey to the reader the authentic experience and ethos of a given culture. In rare cases, it can result in the "absorption" of the anthropologist by the culture under study. Anthropologists voluntarily and intentionally become members of religious communities, participate in rituals, and accept the worldviews of respondents as their own. They go native or undergo subjective soaking (Ellen, 1984, p. 77; Berg, 2001, p. 134).³

Edith Turner, the wife of Victor Turner, among others, argues that going native or subjective soaking is crucial when the goal is to understand religious and spiritual experiences and phenomena (van Binsbergen, 1991, 2003). Turner also favours the idea of anthropology as being part of arts and humanities as well as ethnography as a literary genre and creative process or retelling of stories. She argues that when a researcher studies religious rituals without first participating in the ritual as an active participant, he always "misses something" (Turner, 1987, 1996; Turner & Blodgett, 1992). In an interview with Mathew Engelke (2008), she answered his question whether she promotes and uses the method of immersion in another culture (going native, subjective soaking), as follows: „As much as I bloody well can! To me that's the point. There is a slight limitation, but human beings are extraordinarily pervious to each other" (Engelke, 2008, p. 850).

Another representative of this approach is anthropologist Wim van Binsbergen. During his field research, van Binsbergen decided to be initiated as a sangoma (traditional healer in South Africa). Van Binsbergen considers his experience and knowledge gained during the rituals, in which he acted as a sangoma, to be legitimate scientific data. According to him, the knowledge he has acquired in this way has general validity. He argues that this type of knowledge informs about the state of the world in the same way as data obtained by the methods of "western science" (van Binsbergen, 1991, 2003).

³ As early as the second half of the nineteenth century, there are records of anthropologists that went native. American anthropologist Frank Hamilton Cushing (1857 – 1900) became a member of the Zuni tribe (one of the Indian tribes inhabiting present-day areas of New Mexico and Arizona in North America) during field research. Cushing participated in rituals not as a passive observer, but as an active participant. Despite his active participation he maintained a certain distance as well as scientific objectivity. Cushing eventually left the Zuni tribe and returned to the busy streets of American cities.

Edith Turner and van Binsbergen among others, presented their personal experiences as legitimate scientific data. As Bell and Taylor point out, participation in religious rituals and activities, going native, and subjective soaking are viewed sceptically by many social scientists, especially when presented as a legitimate research strategy (Bell & Taylor, 2014, p. 549-550). One of the subjects of criticism is the credibility of the data obtained and the scientific quality (or value) of the research carried out (Bužeková, 2018; Eller, 2007, 2019, 2020). The absence of a systematic methodology that would allow verification of scientific hypotheses and scientific theories may ultimately lead to interpretive and postmodern anthropology becoming more of a literary genre or style and not a science. I will return to these questions in detail in the following chapters. At this point, I would like to emphasize, that utilizing the method of participant observation in the scientific study of religion and religious rituals does not require active participation, acceptance of the respondents' worldview as "truth" or conversion to religion under research, as some postmodern anthropologists suggest.

Ethnography as a scientific research method or ethnography as a storytelling of an individual?

In the beginnings of anthropology, *ethnographies* were related to individual cultures or societies. At present, *ethnographies* are rarely written as all-encompassing works. Most of the time they are dedicated to a specific group within society or concrete societal or cultural phenomena. *Ethnographies* are based on the detailed description and contextualized interpretation of socio-cultural phenomena recorded among individuals or groups (Berg, 2001, p. 134). Other researchers define *ethnography* as the final product or result of field research and subsequent analysis (Berg, 2001, p. 133). I also think, that Spradley's classic definition of ethnography as the research method and process of describing culture (cultural phenomena), stood the test of time. According to Spradley, the quintessence of this process is to understand a different way of life, a different culture from the perspective of its members (Spradley, 1980, p. 3).

One of the main research strategies used in the process of creating *ethnography* is the thick description. The terms thick and thin description were coined by Clifford Geertz (2000). Thick description, method of a detailed description of sociocultural phenomena and behavioural patterns of individuals and groups in a concrete socio-cultural context, is characteristic of anthropological and ethnological field research in general. However, the utilization of unconventional narrative strategies, as well as the use of subjective experience and related emotions, in the process of writing *ethnographies*, is more typical in post-

modern anthropology. Subsequently it resulted in the emergence of reflexive ethnography (Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Marcus & Fischer, 1999; Stoller, 2010). In reflexive ethnography, the ethnographer's personal feelings, emotions, and reactions to situations encountered during field research are an essential part of the *ethnography*. The concept of evocation of emotions and emphasis on the individual actor has been prominent in the works of postmodern anthropologists since the 1980s.⁴

One of the leading figures of postmodernism in anthropology, James Clifford (1986), sees the ethnographer as both a writer and a scientist with subjective feelings and emotions. However, he does not assert absolute epistemological, cultural, or ethical relativism or resignation on the acquisition of reliable and falsifiable scientific knowledge. Other representatives of postmodern anthropology, Marcus and Fisher (1999) point out that attempts to transfer the personality of an anthropologist into *ethnography* can result in a certain form of exhibitionism. This occurs in cases when anthropologist becomes the focus of *ethnography* instead of the members of culture under study (Kottak, 1991, p. 31).

It is thus clear, that even within postmodern anthropology there are different views on the use of personal experiences and emotions in the process of creating *ethnography*. Not every representative of the postmodern approach in the study of religion utilizes methods such as going native or subjective soaking. However, I believe that this is a difference in degree rather than in kind because most postmodern anthropologists consider their use to be a legitimate practice.

The *ethnographies* of postmodern anthropologists raise several methodological, theoretical, ontological, and epistemological questions. These questions relate to the adequacy and legitimacy of methods such as going native and subjective soaking, active participation in religious rituals, analysis of one's feelings and emotions, and their presentation as scientific knowledge. One of the main points of criticism is that the research conceived in this way cannot be subjected to the rules of falsification and replication, i.e., to the basic principles of scientific research (Bužeková, 2018; Bryan, 1985; Lett, 1997a; Popper, 1997; Sperber, 1996). Therefore, if personal experiences, subjective feelings, and emotions are not to be presented as legitimate scientific data, what is their role concerning anthropology, ethnology, and ethnography? I think the famous British anthropologist of polish origin Bronislaw Malinowski can be an inspiration in finding an answer to this question.

⁴ In the last two decades, there has been a partial shift from dialogue with respondents to cooperation or collaboration with respondents in the process of writing *ethnographies* (Moose, 2006, p. 937). This shift represents an effort to eliminate any type of oppression and differences in power between anthropologists and research participants, and the dominant position of the anthropologist towards respondents.

Bronislaw Malinowski – "The father of field diary"

During the years 1915 – 1916 and 1917 – 1918 Bronislaw Malinowski conducted long-term ethnographic research in the Trobriand Islands, located in the Indian Ocean. During his stay in the Trobriand Islands, Malinowski was immersed in detailed ethnographic research of Trobriand culture. Malinowski collected information about religion, myths and magic, language, subsistence strategies, kinship systems, family, and sexual life of the inhabitants of Trobriand Islands (e.g., Malinowski, 1922, 1927). However, my goal is not to focus on Malinowski's scientific work, since they have received close attention from anthropologists and ethnologist alike (e.g., Ellen, Gellner, Kubica, & Mucha, 1989; Jerotijević, 2011, 2013; Kanovský, 2004). I will focus on the publication *A Diary in the strict sense of the term* (Malinowski, 1967) that was published after his death.

In addition to ethnographic data, Malinowski also recorded his personal feelings, moods, emotions, and sexual fantasies. He kept them separately from other field records. Nevertheless, they were published after his death by his wife Valett. The publication was named *A Diary in the strict sense of the term* (1967, 1989) - hereinafter referred to as Diaries. I believe that this is an important milestone in the history of anthropological and ethnological field research. In a sense, it could even be said that after their publication anthropologist began to view long-term field research from a different perspective.

Before the publication of Diaries, there were few mentions of how field research affected anthropologists. The basic notion of field research was that the anthropologist came into the field, observed, and recorded, conducted interviews, and then published the results completely unaffected by local conditions and worldviews of people they studied. The Diaries shattered this stereotype. It turned out that anthropologists, like everyone else, were affected by separation from their own culture and unknown environment in several ways. The Diaries tell us about Malinowski's reactions to the new and foreign environment. They contain Malinowski's feelings of alienation, descriptions of desires to go back home and leave field research, doubts regarding the importance of his research. There are antipathies and at the same time respect for the respondents as well as descriptions of boredom, arousal and enthusiasm, restlessness and indignation, compassion and hatred, emotions, and sexual desires.

The publication of the Diaries was received controversially. Reactions varied. Several anthropologists (e.g., Hortense Powdermaker, Phyllis Kaberry, Lucy Mair) have expressed a negative attitude: they believed that *Diaries* could negatively affect Malinowski's scientific heritage and intellectual reputation (Firth, 1989). Others also saw a positive side in the publication of Diaries. For example, Clifford Geertz changed his originally negative opinion, approximately twenty years after the publication of the Diaries. Geertz takes an analytical per-

spective in his book *Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author* (Geertz, 1988) and considers Diaries to be an important milestone in the history of anthropology (Firth, 1989). James Clifford, representative of postmodernism in anthropology, considers Diaries as one of the most significant books in the history of anthropology because they reveal the complexity of ethnographic research (Clifford, 1986; Clifford & Marcus, 1986).

Edmund Leach argued that if private notes from field research were to be published, we should not look at them as a representation of the author's personality or scientific opinions. Rather, Diaries represent a tool or way of maintaining contact with the author's reality in unknown and traumatic situations (Firth, 1989, pp. xxii-xxiii). We can perceive them as a kind of catharsis, helping the author to deal with a new and unknown environment, and events, foreign smells, sounds, and tastes.⁵

Following the publication of Malinowski's diaries, many anthropologists have realized that long-term anthropological field research has a significant impact on researchers themselves. The publication of Diaries poured additional oil into the imaginary fire in the debate regarding the objectivity and subjectivity of anthropological research. They were released during a period when the notion of the anthropologist as an objective and unbiased observer of reality was being questioned (D'Andrade, 1995; Geertz, 1979; Hammersley, 1991; Rabinow & Sullivan, 1987).

We should not look at Diaries as a reflection of Malinowski's personal opinions and feelings. Firth believes that they have made a significant contribution to understanding the position and role of the researcher as an active participant in social interactions occurring during field research (Firth, 1989, p. xxxi). The Diaries are proof that, despite the personal and subjective views of the anthropologist, it is possible to maintain objectivity in scientific research. I think they represent sort of a "guide" on how a researcher can approach his feelings, opinions, or emotions during field research. Guide, that I have used myself multiple times.

⁵ It is important to state that Malinowski's subjective states were unlikely to be reflected in his scientific publications. There is no mention of antipathies or ambivalent feelings towards the inhabitants of the Trobriand Islands in the scientific publications of Malinowski. In answering one of the current questions of Malinowski's time, the question of the differences and similarities between "savages" and "civilized", Malinowski focused on emphasizing what "savages" and "civilized" have in common. Parry says that he did not succumb to the temptation to describe the "primitive man" as an antithesis or contrast of the "modern man" (Parry, 2007, p. 340). We can only guess whether Malinowski's occasional frustration and boredom would have been reflected in his scientific work if he had not written a diary.

Diary and its role in ethnographic research: personal experience

During field research ethnographers are exposed to new, unknown stimuli, which in turn can cause emotional reactions. This statement with a connection to the above-mentioned thoughts leads us to the two subsequent questions: 1. what is the role of subjective states, personal feelings, and emotions of a researcher during field research and in the process of writing ethnography, and 2. how should ethnographers approach and deal with them?

I believe that Bernard's distinction of four types of field notes, that anthropologists can create during field research, can shed light on this question. Bernard distinguishes the following four types of field records: short notes made during the ethnographic interview or participant observation (scrapes), diary (personal diary), time notes (time schedule), and complete field notes written at the end of each day of research (Bernard, 2006).

Unlike field notes, a diary should be filled with the personal and emotional reactions of the researcher. The diary represents a place of escape, a safe place. A place where we can speak without being judged. Diary can help researchers reveal their cognitive biases and prejudices. After all, the researcher is "just human" and regardless of formal academic training in ethnographic research, it is not possible to completely avoid the pitfalls of logical fallacies and cognitive biases. Diary helps to deal with fear, loneliness, emptiness experienced during field research. According to Bernard, anthropologists need a diary during ethnographic research, as it not only serves as a form of catharsis but can also prove useful during data analysis. However, as in the case of Malinowski, Bernard stress that a diary should be separated from other forms of field records (Bernard, 2006; Ramšak, 2002). I believe that diary is a useful tool for every ethnographer, regardless of the theoretical concept applied during field research.

I carried out several long-term ethnographic field researches in the rural environment in Slovakia. They were focused on various aspects of religious life. In western Slovakia, the focus of the research was cooperation between the communities of Roman Catholics and Protestants living in one village (Uhrin, 2018, 2020). In central Slovakia, I focused on the communities of Greek Catholics and Orthodox believers and the relationship between these two denominations during the revolutionary years 1968 and 1989 (Bužeková & Uhrin, 2020). In the east part of Slovakia, my research took place in a village, where lived Greek Catholic believers. This research was aimed at the symbolism of religious rituals (Uhrin, 2015, 2020). I conducted ethnographic interviews with religious experts and laypeople. I also utilized the method of participant observation and attended rituals such as catholic masses, baptisms, weddings, or funerals. I observed and recorded people's behaviour during important Christian holidays and festivities. However, I did not participate in any

religious ritual or festival as an active participant. I have retained the role of an active and objective observer. During every field research, I wrote a diary in a manner described by Bernard (Bernard, 2006; also, Uhrin, 2013, 2019, 2021a).

I also experienced states of indignation, boredom, joy, and worry. From time to time, I felt homesick and missed my family, close friends, and colleagues. Some interviews exhausted me mentally, during others I felt bored. These subjective opinions, experiences, and emotions were recorded in a diary. I believe that writing a diary is one of the things that helped me maintain objectivity during research and data analysis.

As an unbeliever (methodological agnostic – see Eller, 2019, 2020), I was confronted with different worldviews. However, the role of scholars of religion is not to evaluate the content of religious ideas and practices, but to examine their meaning and function in a particular society – this statement postulates cultural not ethical or epistemological relativism. During my research, I adhered to the epistemological principles of the scientific method. All data analyses and results published are not based on personal feelings and impressions but were/are subject to peer review and the basic principles of scientific research: replicability and falsifiability (Lett, 2004, 1997a, 1997b; Popper, 1997 - see also, Uhrin, 2021b).

The existence of emotional reactions and subjective feelings experienced during research does not imply that we should abandon the idea of objective research based on the positivist model of science. After all, any research or scientific work is influenced by the subjectivity of the author. The diary, in the form, as Malinowski wrote it, is an effective tool that enables us to filter out feelings and emotions. In Bernard's words: "perhaps the most important thing is to write the diary itself and keep it separate from other field notes" (Bernard, 2006, p. 391).

I would conclude that being aware of the potential influence of personal feelings and emotions of the researcher on the course and results of research (i.e. reflexivity) is an essential moment of anthropological and ethnological field research. However, we should not allow it to result in the resignation on objectivity and the search for universally valid explanations of social and cultural phenomena. As Parry says, we should not succumb to "incoherent fragmentation" and should not allow sociocultural anthropology to become just a mere assemblage of anecdotes and personal narratives (Parry, 2007, p. 338).

Closing thoughts

Since the subject of research in ethnology and anthropology are living human beings and intricate relationships between them, the researcher can't avoid subjective feelings and emotional reactions during field research. Almost all anthropologists experience similar states of body and mind as Malinowski experienced during his stay at Trobriand Islands – they are referred to by the umbrella term culture shock.

Oftentimes postmodernists present their own emotions, subjective feelings, and experiences as relevant scientific data and as a part of their scientific publications. According to some postmodern anthropologists, e.g., Edith Turner or Wim van Binsbergen, the active participation of an anthropologist is essential for understanding religious practices and rituals. Such an approach raises criticism from positivist and scientifically oriented researchers. They argue that data of this nature and the results based on their analysis do not conform to the basic criteria of scientific research: replicability and falsifiability (D'Andrade, 1995; Lett, 1996, 1997a, 1997b, 2004; Popper, 1997).

Emphasis on reflexivity is perhaps the most significant contribution of interpretive and postmodern anthropology to anthropological theory. Reflexivity highlights the unavoidable subjectivity of the researcher and its consequences for data collection and interpretation. Although most ethnographers acknowledge the value of critical reflexive thinking, several argue that literary and interpretive trends stand in opposition to the scientific goals of anthropology, as they focus more on the subjective aspects of ethnographic research than on researcher problems themselves (Bužeková, 2012, pp. 9-10).

The researcher's personality, interests, beliefs, feelings, and emotions influence questions they ask, research problems they address as well as theoretical perspectives they apply. This statement also applies to myself since I was inspired to study religion by professional as well as personal interests. However, our interests, personality, and beliefs mustn't affect the objective aspects and results of the research. Even Malinowski's subjective states, feelings, emotions, frustrations, and sexual fantasies did not translate into his scientific publications. By being aware of the potential limitations resulting from our subjective feelings and emotions, we can systematically work on reducing their impact on the objectivity of research carried out. I believe that we should not disregard the pursuit of objective knowledge. The goal, for anthropologists and ethnologists or any scientist in general, is not to become, as Bernard says: "machines for recording and analysing data". We should strive for objectivity by producing knowledge as little as possible influenced by our prejudices and cognitive biases (Bernard, 2006, pp. 370-371; also, Bryant, 1985; Caplan et al., 2003; Jorgensen, 1989; Lett, 1996, 1997a, 1997b, 2004; Spradley, 1980).

Ethnographic research of religion can be rigorous and positivistic. Berg says that scientists should present their findings as claims that may require further confirmation or verification. Anthropologists and ethnologists should in *ethnographies* present claims that can in principle be replicated and refuted (Berg, 2001, p. 139). Berg's definition coincides with the positivist and objectivist perceptions of anthropology. Thus, I argue, that objectivity in *ethnographies* can be achieved by rigorous adherence to the fundamental principles of scientific research: replicability and falsifiability.

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FOLK BELIEFS ABOUT THE SUPERNATURAL AND FOLK/VERNACULAR RELIGION

Interview with Mirjam Mencej

TATIANA BUŽEKOVÁ

Folk beliefs about the supernatural are some of the oldest research topics in folkloristics, ethnology and socio-cultural anthropology. They usually have been explained in connection to the religious sphere. Today, they are often linked to the term “vernacular religion”, which covers not only folklore, but also some phenomena of alternative spirituality that often make use of folk traditions. In this connection, we decided to address one of the most distinguished scholars researching contemporary folk beliefs, especially related to witchcraft, magic, and the dead. Mirjam Mencej is the professor of Folklore Studies at the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. Her bibliography includes numerous titles addressing various aspects of human life, such as narratives, social relationships, symbolism of the domestic sphere, time and space, death, etc. At Ljubljana University, she teaches related courses, such as *Traditional European Folk Beliefs*, *Introduction to Mythology* and *Ethnology of Witchcraft*. Her works are well-known not only in Slovenia and Central Europe, but also in many other countries, including Germany, Great Britain, United States, and Russia. Her recent book *Styrian Witches in European Perspective. Ethnographic Fieldwork* (2016), published in London and New York by Palgrave Macmillan and Springer, brings a comprehensive exploration of witchcraft beliefs and practices in the rural region of Eastern Slovenia from folkloristic, anthropological, as well as historical, perspectives. The following interview with Mirjam Mencej addresses her work in relation to witchcraft beliefs, vernacular religion, corresponding theoretical and methodological issues, empirical research, and her teaching practice.

The present issue of the *Ethnologia Slovaca et Slavica* yearbook is dedicated to the topic of “Religion in Society”. Religion has been one of the

most important themes in social sciences and humanities since their very beginnings, and it was the focus of the first theories of society. Religion, however, is a broad term, often interlapping with another wide-ranging concept – tradition, which includes folk beliefs about the supernatural – your main research topic. What aroused your interest in this sphere of human life? And how was it reflected during your professional career?

Frankly, what could be called “folk beliefs about the supernatural” has attracted me as far as I can remember. In my childhood, I used to devour magazine articles on UFOs, ghosts, magic and the like, and my school friends still remember me telling frightening ghost stories... I had, of course, no clue at the time that this was going to become my life interest and that it was actually possible to study this topic professionally. When I finished high school and had to make the decision about what to study, I wasn’t even aware that something like “folkloristics”, that is, a discipline which studies folk beliefs, existed. In fact, at the time, there were no classes in folkloristics offered at the University in Ljubljana. I therefore decided to study Sociology of culture and Slovenian language and literature, but this choice anyway ultimately led me towards the study of folk beliefs. My affinity towards this topic was clearly reflected in my diploma thesis on “mythical motives in Slovenian folk narratives” – the theme that, as it later turned out, began my life-long journey of the exploration of folk beliefs as articulated in folk narratives.

Most of your works address folk narratives, which are some of the main subjects of folklore studies. Recently you paid intensive attention to the social aspects of narratives. Indeed, stories do not exist without people, and people do not exist without society; but social relationships are usually explored by social sciences, such as socio-cultural anthropology. What is your opinion on the boundaries between disciplines? How do you see an interdisciplinary approach to the study of folk beliefs and folk narratives?

Indeed, it is folk narratives that have always been the focus of my research. Stemming from literature studies, I was, however, more interested at the beginning in the comparative perspective which treats the narratives as texts, rather than in conducting field research and studying narratives within their particular social context. But it was never the aesthetic aspects of narratives, or their linguistic, that is, textural aspects that I was interested in. In my first studies, I investigated the texts of narratives in relation to rituals and charms and from the perspective of their function in the division of the annual cycle in Slavic traditional culture. Narratives can offer so much insight into people’s life and their worldview, much more than it appears at first glance! Lately, however, as you say, I have become mainly interested in studying narratives within their social context. It is the relation between narratives and the social and cultural context within which they are being transmitted that aroused my scholarly interest. Stories that people mediate in their daily communication tend to address social

and cultural issues; they reflect social relations, express cultural/social values and expectations, discern cultural/social anxieties and conflicts, reaffirm (but also counteract) social norms of behaviour, react to social, economic, political and legal changes in a society, and so on and so forth. Indeed, narratives do not only reflect, and react to, but also constitute reality, and are versions of reality, as social reality is constructed through language. The study of folk narratives can thus bring many new insights into our understanding of the social reality of people, in particular in how they themselves experience it.

Insofar as folkloristics approaches narratives as an integral part of culture and society within which they are mediated, the boundaries between folkloristics and anthropology are definitely blurred. Indeed, since the end of the nineteen sixties, anthropology and folkloristics have to a large degree become intertwined. However, while we folklorists take folklore, that is, “expressive culture”, as the basis and the starting point of our investigation, anthropologists may pay more attention to other aspects of social life and culture and approach them through concepts that folklorists may not necessarily apply in their research. On the other hand, there are aspects of expressive culture that folklorists have long learned to comprehend and pay attention to, whereas anthropological studies, when they incorporate narratives into their study, seem to sometimes lack a sensibility for them. Such are, for instance, the relevance of narrative genres in the critical examination of narratives and the recognition of the types of tales that people share, the importance of individuals as participants in the conduit and their repertoires, the understanding of actions as ostensions, the performative and discursive aspects of narration, and so on.

That said, not all folklorists are necessarily interested in the social aspects of folk narratives and in how narratives reflect or impact social context. While most folklorists would nowadays pay at least some attention to the social and cultural context, knowing that folklore does not appear in a social and cultural vacuum, they may still focus on the texts as such, on their aesthetical value or linguistic specifics, and study the comparative perspective of particular motifs and types of narratives and alike.

Witchcraft is an important topic of your research. Your book *Styrian Witches*, as well as your earlier works, present witchcraft as part of social reality, strongly related to misfortune. Thus, your research results are in accordance with many anthropological works exploring witchcraft beliefs all over the world, starting with the classical Evans-Pritchard’s *Witchcraft, Magic, and Oracles Among the Azande* ([1937] 1976). However, in each society this universal phenomenon is always shaped by a specific socio-cultural context. Can you, please, give us some examples of such specifics of Slovenian witchcraft beliefs?

Indeed, in anthropological work, witchcraft is generally considered as an ideology, a cultural repertoire explaining misfortune, ascribing its origin to the malevolent agency of others, that is, “witches”. These are usually searched for among neighbours believed to use apparently supernatural means to cause misfortune or injury to others. Research into early modern as well as contemporary witchcraft in Europe showed that accusations of bewitchment tend to arise in specific socio-cultural contexts: more or less isolated, small-scale, close-knit traditional agricultural communities. In these communities, people are bound to the land and tend to remain in the same village or region from birth to death; they live in precarious and often harsh living conditions, and mostly depend on themselves for survival. Such communities appear to be the typical socio-economic context in which witchcraft in Europe indeed continues to provide a means to explain misfortunes, shaping social reality into the twenty-first century. This description also applies to the rural region in Eastern Slovenia where my students and I first came across rather vivid witchcraft beliefs and occasionally ongoing accusations of witchcraft during our field research in 2000-2001.

However, in spite of the common features of the social-cultural contexts within which witchcraft tends to thrive, and many common features of witchcraft discourse all over Europe, witchcraft still appears in many diverse shapes and forms which may vary extensively between regions. Let me mention but a few specific features of witchcraft in the region where we conducted our fieldwork. Within Europe, for instance, there are plenty of different techniques and manners for carrying out bewitchment. In our region, however, the technique that by far prevailed was that of burying eggs in a neighbour’s property in order to cause harm to their livestock or poultry. Another example: in France, for instance, where Favret-Saada conducted her extensive research on witchcraft at the end of the 1960s, beginning of the 1970s, the victims of witchcraft assaults were typically male farmers, unable to handle the permitted violence they needed to perform as heads of the farms and as successful salesmen of their products on the market. The unwitchers therefore basically carried out a “therapy”, as Favret-Saada argues, helping them to achieve the needed aggressiveness (Favret-Saada, 1980). In our region, however, where there was no market where the farming products could be sold, it was mostly females that were believed to have fallen victim of a bewitchment. They also formed the highest number of the unwitchers’ clientele. When their status, which entirely depended on their success in performing domestic tasks, within a family and a community was threatened due to misfortunes in their area of domestic work, a woman had only one possible option: to avert insinuations that the misfortunes were her fault and redirect the responsibility for them onto another person – a witch. This, however, could not be carried out persuasively without the unwitcher’s support.

Perhaps the most significant characteristic of witchcraft in the studied region, yet quite uncommon elsewhere, is the integration of the night-time experiences of being led astray (often combined with the experience of seeing light(s)) into the witchcraft discourse. Narratives describing such experiences are common in European folklore, but these are usually attributed to fairies, the souls of the dead, or other “supernatural” agencies, whereas in our region people as a rule understood them as experiences caused by witches. While witchcraft elsewhere is thus typically restricted to social relationships, in our region it also encompasses what might be understood as experiences of the “uncanny”. The narratives about “night witches” are not usually related to particular people in the community. At first glance, they have nothing in common with the neighbour-witches or “village witches”, meaning those who were identified as such by the whole community, not only by an affected neighbour. However, what unites all three types of witches is their otherness: territorial, social, symbolic and ontological. They all transgress the established boundaries, be it those of the human body, the homestead, the community or the world of humans as such.

In addition to the social context, in your book you paid attention to the psychological mechanisms causing witchcraft accusations or those which may help bewitchment as well as un-witchment to work. Do you consider applying a psychological perspective to be necessary in order to explain witchcraft beliefs?

Anthropologists (and historians) would usually acknowledge that (fear of) envy plays an important part in witchcraft accusations. They would also usually emphasise that it is people's *belief* that is crucial for these “supernatural” attacks to be effective, and that they are only effective to the extent that victims allow them to be. The victims' claims that they suffered misfortune due to an alleged bewitchment have thus been explained (away) as a result of their weakness, fear, imagination, suggestibility and similar. Indeed, the latest attempt by Edward Bever to explain the “realities of witchcraft” (also) by psychological mechanisms has not received a most welcoming reception in the academia. Bever explained the harmful effects of looking, touching and speaking, typically understood as manners of bewitchment, by scientific studies showing that these manners of expressing hostility can trigger a stress response in a recipient which can be highly somatic. Sorcery, i.e. magic practices too, according to Bever, work using the same psychological mechanisms, whereby an interpersonal conflict would usually take place beforehand. Facing the witch's overt anger, or knowledge via a third party that she had performed a bewitching deed, may trigger an illness or other unwished-for bodily reactions. Indeed, he argued that people's *belief* in the effect of witchcraft (and fear of it), although a stimulus, is not critical for the interpersonal effects to occur.

At any rate, no matter how much weight one puts on people's belief, psychological processes certainly do play their part in the fear of witchcraft and

contribute to the accusations of bewitchment. Contrary to the social perspective, however, these were rather seldom discussed in witchcraft research. In my book, I thus tried at least briefly to point to the psychological aspects of witchcraft as I believe they can supplement our knowledge of the reality of witchcraft.

In a broader discourse, witchcraft beliefs and magic beliefs are often presented as irrational, even as survivals, in the sense of Edward Tylor's theory of socio-cultural evolution (Tylor, ([1871] 1920). The irrationality of magic has also been connected to Max Weber's idea that modernity is characterized by the progressive disenchantment of the world. Weber ([1919] 1970) argues that in a dis-enchanted world, "the ultimate and most sublime values have retreated from public life"; the magical, "mysterious incalculable forces" give way to "calculation", scientific rationalism and bureaucracy (pp. 155, 139). However, your research, as well as other ethnographic research, has demonstrated that magical beliefs do not belong to the past. On the contrary, not only do they exist in rural areas, but today they are also frequently used in various spiritual movements. Have you met with the use of traditional folk beliefs in spiritual practices or spiritual/religious movements in an urban environment? Can you give us some examples?

You are absolutely correct. People would not have continued to believe in the reality of witchcraft and magic had their beliefs been based merely on irrationality and ignorance, as has been assumed since the Enlightenment. As several authors have argued already, witchcraft has its own logic, no less rational than other ways of thinking; it is a way of knowing that obviously covers domains that are not satisfactorily explained by rational ways of thinking. De Blécourt (1999, pp. 212-213) indeed rightly points to the "presupposed narcissistic hegemony" of such a "vulgar rationalistic approach".

New spiritual practitioners in an urban environment also often rely on the discourse of their rural "predecessors". They draw upon similar beliefs and in their therapies follow similar procedures to those of traditional "cunning-folk". That said, the changes that our society has gone through in the last decades or so are clearly reflected in the adaptations that they have made in their practices and discourse. During my study of witchcraft, I also conducted an interview with a New-Age practitioner from the capital to whom a woman from a village who feared she was bewitched turned. Although her discourse in every way resembled that of traditional rural unwitchers, she – unlike traditional unwitchers who as a rule confirmed their patients' suspicions that they were bewitched – denied that witchcraft was at stake and dismissed any assumption of bewitchment. While the identification of the witch in the traditional unwitching procedure was considered crucial for the overcoming of the witch's power and protection against further bewitchments, the New-Age therapist, on the contrary,

redirected the client's focus from the witch to themselves. The protection against evil, and consequently against all further misfortunes, was no longer achieved in the therapy by the identification of the enemy posing a threat from the outside, and a counteraction against this enemy. Instead, it was ultimately proclaimed to lie *inside* the patient's own body and psyche. The process of personal growth, implying the elimination of negative emotions and the strengthening of one's "energy" with the help of prayer, meditation and therapy, was the process that was suggested as the one leading to permanent and ultimate protection against all sorts of "enemies" from the outside. While in the context of traditional witchcraft, the key underlying premise was that the source of misfortune is a threat from the outside, in New-Age therapy the main arena of counteraction against the perpetrator is thus transferred from the outside to the inside, to one's own body and mind.

This basic difference between traditional and contemporary procedures aimed at resolving personal misfortune, and ultimately, at releasing anxiety, thus seems to reflect the changes that have occurred in our contemporary, individualised neoliberal society, in which individuals are encouraged to look at their own life as an artistic product, an enterprise, and to take it into their own hands. Yet, just like the specialists from the past who helped people relieve their anxieties in times of misfortune by relocating the blame from themselves to another member of the community, and thus ultimately helping them to maintain their social position when it was threatened, contemporary New-Age specialists, too, help people relieve their tension in times of misfortune. They help them to resolve, or at least to stay in control of, their own anxieties – and thus consequently to maintain their social position in the society. "Unwitchers" who adapted to the New-Age discourse and the demands of contemporary society thus continue to be in demand by people in times of anxiety, triggered not only by economic uncertainty but also by the problems that people experience with regard to their social roles. At the same time, however, they help protect contemporary neoliberal society at large from any "disturbances" by individuals who are not constantly maximally productive and fully in control of themselves – as society expects them to be.

The resurgence of magic and, in general, the revival of spiritual life during recent decades has been labelled as the "re-enchantment of the world" – the term used by Zygmunt Bauman (1993) who attached it to post-modernity. What is your explanation of the persistence of magic in the modern and postmodern world? Do you consider the idea of a shift from an enchanted past through a disenchanted period to a re-enchanted present suitable, or it is perhaps too simplistic?

The concept of re-enchantment is based on the assumption that a dis-enchantment took place at some time in the past. Since the advent of the Enlightenment, a rationalistic and sceptical worldview has indeed become dominant

in our society, and belief in the supernatural was thought to ultimately disintegrate with industrialisation and urbanisation. Towards the end of the twentieth century, folklorists thus announced the end of ghosts and haunting, witches, fairies, and the supernatural in general, as an indisputable phenomenon. However, surveys and polls conducted in Europe and the USA since the beginning of the twentieth century demonstrated that the level of “superstition” has remained at a steady, high rate. A fairly high percentage of people claimed to have experienced some sort of “supernatural” experience. The results of the polls thus obviously contradicted the scholarly opinion about the end of beliefs in the “supernatural”. Apparently, in spite of scholars’ predictions about its extinction in today’s rationalistic world, the “supernatural” has continued to thrive. While the interpretations of the “supernatural” may have changed, transformed, and adapted to the modern worldview, the “supernatural” nevertheless occupies our lives just as it did in the past.

One may therefore wonder to what extent the dis-enchantment really took place, and to what extent the belief in the “supernatural” was perhaps just silenced and banned from the dominant discourse, while continuing to silently linger on. As de Certeau argued (2007), notions and customs that fell under the rubric of “superstition” were considered inferior. Their proponents were marginalised and ridiculed and consequently, their potential opposition to the scientific way of knowing and access to intellectual, political, and economic power in our society were weakened, too. Lately, however, the so-called “neospiritual” or “New-Age” discourse seems to be rendering new venues for people to articulate, negotiate, and evaluate their “supernatural” experiences without being ridiculed or fearing putting one’s mental sanity under scrutiny. Indeed, it seems to have been slowly also gaining access to social power.

During recent decades, the ways in which scholars classify and study religion have changed, especially under the influence of the “re-enchantment of the world”. As Steven Sutcliffe and Marion Bowman (2000, p. 3) notice, many aspects of vernacular religion and contemporary spirituality fall outside the traditional purview of academic studies of religion, although the changes in religious belief and praxis makes it increasingly difficult to characterise what is “mainstream religion”. The term “vernacular religion” as such refers to a broad field that has been delineated in different ways in different academic disciplines. Yet, it has been usually related to “folk” and “popular” beliefs (Yoder, 1974). Other terms used in folkloristics are folk religion and religious folklore. However, as Primiano (1995) has stated, these terms imply that religion “somewhere exists as a pure element which is in some way transformed, even contaminated, by its exposure to human communities” (p. 39). What is your understanding of religion, vernacular religion or folk religion? How do you apply these terms in your works?

As with most academic terms, here too there are arguments pro and contra for each of the terms you list. While the US scholar Dan Yoder, influenced by German scholarship, rejected the usage of the pejorative term “superstition“ in favour of the allegedly non-pejorative “folk belief“, this term, too, has been lately put under scrutiny insofar as the term *belief* likewise calls into question its own validity – we usually describe our own beliefs as “knowledge” (see Motz 1998). It was Yoder, too, who first proposed the term “folk religion” for the subject matter that lies at the intersection of official or organised religion and traditional (folk) culture, ranging from the permitted areas associated with official religion to the occult areas, forbidden in official religion (Yoder, 1974). In order to do justice to the variety of manifestations and perspectives found within past and present human religiosity and, as you mentioned above, to avoid the two-tiered model which dichotomized “official” vs. “unofficial”, “institutional” vs. “non-institutional”, and “organized” vs. “unorganised” forms of religiosity, Leonard Primiano (1995) later proposed the term “vernacular religion”. This he defined as “religion as it is lived: as human beings encounter, understand, interpret, and practice it”. This term thus implies focusing on individuals and studying the actual beliefs and practices of people and their individual creations of religion (while all the time paying attention to the encounter between the researcher and the researched in the field). However, even the term “vernacular” as such has acquired in scholarly discourse – as Howard (2003) demonstrated – rather different connotations and understandings. Recently, moreover, James Kapaló (2011; 2013), referring to the semantic loadings and ideological dimension of the terms, again argued for the usage of the term “folk religion”, at least within the context of European modernity, with its history of the dominance of Christianity, nation states and romantic nationalism, and of the Enlightenment with its secularism. More than vernacular religion, the term “folk religion”, he argues, implies the religion of people as a power-laden site of religious struggle and conflicting interests, ideologies and identities. I agree with Kapaló that while the term “vernacular religion” may therefore be more appropriate when one studies various forms of religiosity within neospiritual / New-Age movements, and globalised religious ideas, the term “folk religion” may be more suitable when issues of national ideologies and struggle for political and ecclesiastical power have to be taken into account.

At Ljubljana University, you are teaching several courses that are related to your research. In what way do you use your research results in your teachings?

This depends on the class – in some classes I rely more, in others less, on my own research. One way or another, however, I tend to illustrate the theory, and enliven the teaching with examples from my own field research. I often present stories that I recorded in the field and share experiences from my field-

work with my students. I feel that this way I can bring the concepts and theory much closer to students and attract their interest in the subject.

What are your plans for future research?

As a member of the ERC project *East-West. Vernacular religion on the boundary of Eastern and Western Christianity: continuity, changes and interactions*, led by Éva Pócs, for the last four years before the pandemic I was conducting field research in various, mostly rural regions of Bosnia and Herzegovina. I was mainly interested in how belief narratives about the dead, who were killed in the war in the nineties, relate to traditional notions about the dead who, due to their premature and violent death, are unable to proceed to the other world and are doomed to remain stuck between the worlds, appearing to the living as ghosts. I have already published several articles, and my latest article on ghost narratives from the post-genocide Srebrenica is just about to be published in the journal *Folklore* (London). In it, I argue that the ghost stories, spread among the Bosnian (Muslim) population in the Srebrenica region, are the effects of the persistent denial of the genocide by the Serbian population and of a strong sense among Bosnians that justice has not yet been properly restored and the perpetrators not adequately punished. Ghost narratives play a significant role in the war discourse: through them, the Bosnian inhabitants of the Srebrenica region, lacking social and political power in the Serb-dominated territory, are able to articulate and maintain their memory of the massacre, reclaim the space, acquire some sense of control over the situation, and thus ultimately, some empowerment. Moreover, ghost legends occasionally also prove vehicles for the transmission of ideological messages in the post-war identity processes of the Bosnian ethnic community in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Anyway, there is still much material that I gathered during my fieldwork that needs to be studied properly. So, hopefully in the near future, I will be able to find some time to sit down and finally start thinking of writing the book.

I am looking forward to it! I am sure that it will bring, once more, plenty of interesting ideas and insights into the nature of beliefs about the supernatural. Thank you very much for your thoughtful and inspiring answers!

Thank you so much for inviting me! It was a pleasure thinking about your thought-provoking questions and well-taken ideas! I am also looking forward to reading your future articles and books on contemporary vernacular religion!

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**THE CONTRIBUTION
OF PROFESSOR JÁN MICHÁLEK
TO SCHOLARSHIP AND TEACHING
IN THE CONTEXT OF RESEARCH
ON FOLK PROSE IN SLOVAKIA¹**

HANA HLÔŠKOVÁ

Introduction

On October 15th 2020, the family and – given the pandemic at the time – only a few former colleagues and students paid their last respects in Bratislava's crematorium to the university professor Ján Michálek, (*12. 3. 1932 – †10. 10. 2020). J. Michálek's entire professional life was linked to his *alma mater*: the Faculty of Arts of Comenius University in Bratislava. During the course of over fifty years, he devoted his energy, creative ideas and detailed sense of organisation to the faculty in his teaching and in his various teaching, academic and administrative functions. However, first and foremost he trained and taught dozens of graduates of the faculty, which was the only faculty in Slovakia until the early 1990s to train adepts of ethnographic and folklore studies and practice. J. Michálek was also head of this department from 1970 to 1990, when it went under the name of Department of Ethnography and Folklore Studies of the Faculty of Arts of Comenius University.

He also played an essential part in the history of the *Studia Academica Slovaca* (SAS) summer school of Slovak language and culture at the Faculty of Arts of Comenius University in Bratislava, where he gave regular lectures

¹ This paper is the output of the VEGA 2/0107/19 project "Folklore, folk studies and ideology". It also contains a version of the paper which was published in Slovak (Hlôšková, 2014, pp. 196-216).

for many years, as is evidenced by his thirty-three published articles in the anthologies of the SAS, and which formed the basis, among other things, for L. Mlynka's statement that "...after the studies on linguistics and literary theory, those concerned with folk culture are the second largest group." The author particularly highlights J. Michálek's role: " 'the most productive' " writer, not only from the point of view of the quantity of articles, but also as the key writer, is J. Michálek, who is one of the anthology's main authors" (Mlynka, 2000, p. 359).



Ján Michálek

The professional biography of J. Michálek²

J. Michálek was born on March 12th 1932 in Brezová pod Bradlom. In 1956 he graduated in history and ethnography from the Faculty of Arts of Comenius University in Bratislava, and from then on until his retirement in 2004 he taught in the department known today as the Department of Ethnology and Museology of the Faculty of Arts of Comenius University.

His academic work focused primarily on the history of folklore studies, the theory of folklore studies and individual genres of folk prose. As J. Michá-

² References to the publication activity of prof. Michálek see in his selected bibliography, which is a part of this text.

lek himself said: “As far as my professional orientation is concerned, my choice (oral tradition, historical themes in folklore, its current situation, the history of Slovak ethnology) was based on current needs in this area, as well as on my knowledge and view of exceptionally momentous events and changes (the year 1948³, industrialisation, collectivisation etc.) in society” (Michálek, 2011, p. 128).

He defended his doctoral thesis *Historická tematika v ústnom podaní na Podjavorinsko-Podbradlansku* [Historical Themes in Oral Stories in the Podjavorinsko-Podbradlansko Region] in 1965. Together with J. Olexa, J. Michálek prepared a translation of the 1928 international catalogue of folk tales by A. Aarne and S. Thompson, *The Types of the Folktale. A Classification and Bibliography*, published in Slovak in 1961. In 1971, he published a monograph on the memorate as a specific narrative genre, *Spomienkové rozprávanie s historickou tematikou* [Reminiscent narrative with a historical theme], which acted as his habilitation thesis.

J. Michálek prepared several university textbooks and teaching manuals. *Dejiny etnografie a folkloristiky. Postavy, diela, inštitúcie* [The History of Ethnography and Folklore Studies. Personalities, Works, Institutions] was published in three editions, and the book *Tradicia a inovácia (štúdie o ľudovej kultúre)* [Tradition and Innovation (studies on folk culture)] was published in 2001. He was a co-editor and wrote the afterword to the work by P. J. Šafárik *Slovanský národopis* [Slav Ethnography] which was published as volume IV of *Spisy P. J. Šafárika* [Works of P. J. Šafárik] in 1995.

J. Michálek also worked as an editor for the publishing houses VEDA, Tatran, Mladé letá and others on numerous collections and selections of the folk oral tradition, many of which were re-edited, for example *Čarovné zrkadlo. Výber zo slovenskej ľudovej slovesnosti* [The Magic Mirror. A selection of the Slovak folk oral tradition] (1973, 1983, 1988). He was present at the inception of the *Folk Art in Slovakia* series by the Tatran publishing house, in which he published monographs of memorates *Keď je dobrá klobása* [When there's a good sausage] (1987), local and historical legends *Zvonové studničky* [Wells of bells] (1990) and demonological legends *Na križných cestách* [At the crossroads] (1991). He studied the narrative of the Slovak National Uprising in his publication *Protifašistický odboj na Slovensku v rozprávaniach ľudu* [The anti-fascist resistance in Slovakia in folk narrative] (1985).

He edited several local and regional monographs, for example *Stará Turá* (1983), *Brezová pod Bradlom* (1970, 1998), *Ľud hornádskej doliny* (1989) and

³ This concerns the change in Czechoslovakia's political and economic system, when in February 1948 the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia became the decisive political power.

Gemer – Malohont (2011),⁴ as well as several anthologies of academic conferences, for example *Slovenská ľudová kultúra (stredoeurópske vzťahy)* [Slovak Folk Culture (Central European relations)] (1996).

He is the author of twenty entries in the *Encyklopédia ľudovej kultúry Slovenska I., II* [Encyclopaedia of the Folk Culture of Slovakia I, II] (1995).

He supervised dozens of master thesis⁵ and doctoral thesis. J. Michálek was a member of several editorial boards for academic journals and a long-standing member of academic councils and committees for awarding academic honours at the Faculty of Arts of Comenius University and the Slovak Academy of Sciences. He was a founding member of the Slovak Ethnography Society⁶ (Godálová, 2006, p. 47) established in 1958.⁷

J. Michálek's teaching, academic and organisational work was rewarded by several institutions with commemorative tablets and medals; for example, he was awarded the Gold Medal of Comenius University.

After this factual information, the next section of this article will focus on the characteristics of J. Michálek's principal articles in the context of the study of folk prose in folklore studies in Slovakia.

Research on folk prose in the academic work of J. Michálek

Historical traditions

The period following the Second World War can be characterised in our area of interest in the oral historical tradition in Slovakia as “mono-thematic” in the sense that researchers concentrated on one thematic cycle.

J. Komorovský's work (1957) is a complex folklore, or more exactly culture-historical take on the king Matej tradition. Another branch of folk research on oral historical traditions is the interpretation of the brigand tradition. The exploitation and cultivation of the brigand tradition has a specific place in the history of Slovak culture (Hlôšková, 2005) and this tradition can also be said

⁴ In the publications *Stará Turá*, and *Záhorská Bratislava*, he is the author of the chapters on folk prose.

⁵ J. Michálek was also the supervisor for the master thesis *Ľudoví rozprávači – nositelia jednej z foriem súčasného folklorizmu* (1978) of the author of this paper.

⁶ At present, the Society operates under the name of Ethnographic Society of Slovakia.

⁷ At the first General Assembly of the Slovak Ethnographic Society, J. Michálek was elected academic secretary. During the 1969-1972 period, he was elected as vice-president of the society.

to have the same place in terms of its interpretation in folk studies. In brief, this approach can be described as deliberate. I perceive the orientation of post-war Slovak folk studies in the area of verbal traditions mainly towards the brigand tradition as part of the deliberate monitoring of those parts of narrative interpretations of the past which were given a degree of progressive ideological expression. In this understanding, folk brigand traditions were classified as part of the movement of popular displays against social and national oppressors such as peasant revolts, anti-feudal uprisings, workers' strikes, the partisans' fight against fascism. This deliberate focus in researchers' work, however, often led to a distorted image of the ideological form, poetic value and true function of these traditions in the repertoire of folk narrative. O. Sirovátka pointed at the problem of the bipolarity of brigand traditions at the beginning of the 1970s (Sirovátka, 1972).

From the perspective of the historical starting-point, the folk image of the revolutionary years of 1848/1849 is one of the "young" and regionally defined historical traditions, in particular the image of one of the leaders of the revolutionary events of that period, J. M. Hurban.⁸ J. Michálek (1966, 1978) described the characteristics of this cycle of narratives with a historical theme. He places the tradition in a specific and historical context, while characterising the events of the time, the attitude of J. M. Hurban and of the popular classes within it. J. Michálek came to the conclusion that the verbal tradition in which the awareness of the population of the Podbradlansko-Podjavorinsko region processed the theme of the events of 1848/1849 was grafted on to traditional ideas and images. At the field research stage, the author described the contemporary state of the material which researchers had omitted, approaching the material with aesthetic criteria for assessing narrative expression. It is this very typology of certain life situations that gives the legend tradition its permanent revitalisation, where the itinerant motifs are updated with local, chronological and personal specifics. J. Michálek considers the association and merging of individual historical stages as an expression of the continuity of the narrative tradition, correctly in my opinion, which is not, of course, just a peculiarity of the traditions about the events of 1848/1849. I consider his treatment of the issue as stimulative, mainly because he paid attention to the historical tradition of regional content, and recorded the contemporary state of tradition, while describing both its semantic dominant, as well as the set of motifs of the given cycle. J. Michálek (1999) devoted an article published in the Anthology of the SAS to his native region and the oral tradition concerning an important figure born

⁸ Jozef Miloslav Hurban (1817 – 1888), Lutheran priest, writer, journalist, politician and organiser of cultural life in the Slovak national movement, a leading figure in the Slovak uprising of 1848/1849, the first president of the Slovak national council.

there, M. R. Štefánik⁹. He included in it the results of the long-term and extensive research to which his former student Z. Vanovičová devoted herself (Vanovičová, 1990, 1991, 1993, 1996).

There are few specialised folk studies works on the topic of the Tatar or Turkish incursions and rule on the Slovak territory of medieval Hungary. In works of a synthetic nature, the Turkish cycle is characterised as one of the dominant cycles of legends of the Slovak prose folklore tradition (Melicherčík, 1968, p. 618). I consider it necessary to pick out the works of J. Michálek and M. Kosová from among the specialised folk studies on this topic. In his study *Povesti o Turkoch v podjavorinsko-podbradlanskom kraji* [Legends on the Turks in the Podjavorinsko and Podbradlansko regions] (1969), he concentrates on materials obtained in field research at the beginning of the 1960s on an area with a sparsely populated, remote hill settlement on the Slovak-Moravian border. By setting them in specific historical and social circumstances relating to the Turkish dominance, the author characterises the thematic dominants of the oral tradition and gives relevant conclusions of a generalising nature. He tries to define the causes for the persistence of the oral tradition about the Turks in the narrative repertoire of this area and considers the nature of the settlement as a stabilising element which was a condition for preserving archaic elements of folk culture. This study also includes brief characteristics of stories from the perspective of folk poetics. The author also raises the issue of what was originally folk material used as a model for literary interpretation by the poet S. Chalupka (1812-1883) and thus re-entering the folk narrative repertoire.

The article by M. Kosová is outstanding for its clear-cut methodological focus, pregnant formulations and its way of dealing with the issue of historical legends with a Turkish theme (Kosová, 1972). The foundations of semiotics form the theoretical basis of the author's analysis of the relation between *fabula* and *sujet* in folk legends with a Turkish theme. The author limited the corpus of the material studied chronologically to reports from the last fifty years and the territory of Slovakia and the Moravian-Slovak border region, and partly the Ukrainian areas adjacent to the territory of eastern Slovakia. The texts represented both the territory incorporated in the 16th and 17th centuries into the Ottoman empire, the territories under direct threat of Turkish incursions as well as territories where historical evidence shows that they were not under Turkish dominance nor were they under threat. In the understanding of a folk work as a model of reality, with this work fulfilling the role of a means of information, M. Kosová considers "being under threat" as the *sujet* basis of legends with a Turkish theme, because it has a dominant status in the hierarchy of semantic elements. Based on an explanation of the origin of the *sujets* of folk legends

⁹ Milan Rastislav Štefánik (1880 – 1919), astronomer, photographer, military pilot, brigadier general in the French armed forces, diplomat and politician. He had the most merit in building up the Czecho-Slovak foreign resistance during the First World War.

with a Turkish theme from the paradigm of military themes, the author tried to define them. She thus labels the *sujets* of folk legends with a Turkish theme as “a development starting from being under threat to its liquidation or surrender to the process of the least binary semantic opposite” (Kosová, 1972, p. 386).

We may also consider the work of J. Michálek as “monothematic” from the point of view of the wider circle of genres of reminiscent narrative and life-based narrative with the theme of the First and Second World Wars and resistance in the Slovak National Uprising, to which I shall return later.

Literary folklorism

The personal biography of J. Michálek includes information on popularising volumes of oral tradition which he edited as collections of individual genres.¹⁰ In addition to samples of the folk oral tradition, the publications also contain accompanying specialist texts, but written with consideration for the potential recipient, the ordinary reader. In the case of several of these volumes, the readers were children. In the high-quality series by the publisher Tatran, *Ludové umenie na Slovensku* [Folk Art in Slovakia], J. Michálek published three books devoted to memorates, demonological, and local and historical legends (Michálek, 1987, 1990, 1991).

He also formulated his experience and theoretical knowledge gained during his work editing texts of folk oral tradition in academic articles concerning the issue of so-called literary folklorism. This is the category in which all edited folklore texts fall when they leave their original communication system bound to oral telling and the specific hierarchy of functions of this narrative genre or another. Folklore texts which are part of a technical type of communication go through various levels of editing. In the 1970s and 1980s, great attention was paid in Slovakia to the theory of folklorism, mainly thanks to another important Slovak folklorist, Milan Leščák.¹¹ He developed the concepts in several seminars and conferences addressing this issue. A special set of papers in the “Folklore in mass communication media and publishing practice” section, devoted specifically to the issue of literary folklorism, was presented at the international seminar held in Martin as one of the events of the jubilee XXV. Východná Folklore Festival (Švehlák, 1980). In his paper, J. Michálek (1980, pp. 44-51) focused on the complementarity of the relationship between so-called

¹⁰ The publications are: *Zo živých prameňov* (1960), *Studnička* (1962), *O Jankovi Polienkovi* (1963), *Havran a liška* (1964), *A róka és a hollo* (1966), *Čarovné zrkadlo* (1973).

¹¹ Professor Milan Leščák – from 1963 to 1995 an academic member of staff of the Institute of Ethnography SAS (the present-day Institute of Ethnology and Social Anthropology SAS), from 1995 to 2004, a university lecturer at the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology of the Faculty of Arts of Comenius University (present-day Department of Ethnology and Museology).

authentic folkore and so-called stylised folklore in the system of contemporary culture. He emphasised the fact that “Folklore in its original, authentic forms and in various forms of its second existence has specific opportunities for its use and action thanks to its ideological, aesthetic and ethical content” (Michálek, 1980, p. 45). The author states that “Authentic folklore and folk culture, as well as stylised folklore, both represent two real and living elements of society’s cultural life.” (Michálek, 1980, p. 45). He characterises literary folklorism as “...a long-lasting process of the existence of folk values in a fixed form in the most varied specialised collections, as well as in the varied situations of readers’ publications and editions.” (Michálek, 1980, p. 46). He differentiates the extent of interventions in the “original” folklore text: “If in the professional transcription of a text, there is an attempt to achieve maximum precision in representing the narrated variant, a literary “retelling”, a readers’ edition aims for further processes and interventions more in such a version. It can lead, for example, to a contamination of the variants of the same type, to the construction of a so-called optimal variant of several specific versions, for the use of linguistic and stylistic elements in other texts etc.” (Michálek, 1980, p. 49).

The complementarity of the mutual relationship between folklore and expressions of folklorism in living culture can also be seen in the way these communication systems influence each other, which in the case of literary folklorism means that what were originally folklore values return through it into the folklore environment.

History of folk studies

The history of this subject, namely folk studies, has a special place in J. Michálek’s research and teaching. In 1990, the first edition of his university manual on the history of folklore studies in Slovakia was published (Michálek, 1990). In his own way, J. Michálek was following on from the work of M. Dzubáková (1976) devoted to the beginnings of folk studies in Slovakia via the figures of J. Kollár (1793 – 1852) and P. J. Šafárik (1795 – 1861). He also devoted several papers to them and cooperated in editing Volume IV of the “Spisy Pavla Jozefa Šafárika – Slovanský národopis” [Collected Works of Pavol Jozef Šafárik – Slav Ethnography]. Under the modest title of *Doslov* [Afterword], the publication includes a study by J. Michálek in which he evaluates the multi-faceted academic work of P. J. Šafárik, while concentrating on the area of ethnography in the historical context of the level of the contemporary development of academic research and knowledge influenced by the movement for national revival. Through the characteristics of his work and activities, the author also succeeded in depicting the personality traits of P. J. Šafárik: as an organiser, motivator, leading figure and colleague in the field of collecting, processing and providing a scientific interpretation of sources and

facts. He also pointed out Šafárik's prognostication of Štúr's stage of interest in folk culture, but in the oral tradition in particular, when pointing out the contemporary understanding of the folk oral tradition as one of the possible historiographic sources.

J. Michálek drew attention to the works of researchers from outside the folk studies environment and valued their contribution to the history of folk studies, namely mainly literary historians of the 20th century, such as A. Mráz, R. Mrlan, F. Votruba, R. Brtáň, J. Horák, K. Rosenbaum, V. Kochol, P. Liba and others who understood the function of folklore's influence within literary folklorism in the history of Slovak literature (Michálek, 1996, pp. 13-19). J. Michálek wrote several specialist papers and analytical studies devoted to figures in folk studies or ethnography such as J. Kollár, P. J. Šafárik, A. Horislav-Škultéty, P. Dobšinský, J. L. Holuby, K. A. Medvecký, S. Cambel, P. G. Bogatyriov, R. Bednárik, J. Mjartan and K. Plicka.

He realised that Slovak folk studies of the time did not have a work on their own history which might be an adequate pendant to the syntheses on the history of ethnography written by V. Urbancová (Urbancová, 1970, 1987). He also pointed to the fact that "...ethnography as a science has also contributed – albeit to different extents – to the democratisation of our national culture. Its contribution has been all the greater for the active manner in which it tried to include the discovered values of folk culture in contemporary national movements and cultural efforts" (Michálek, 1996, p. 13). He pointed to the importance of analysing so-called "ego documents": "In this context, I draw particular attention to the importance of studying the relationship between researchers and other interested participants in folk studies, beginning with their collection activity and continuing to their most significant publications" (Michálek, 1971, p. 17). In the past, the author of this article applied such a focused approach to studies concerning A. Kmeť, Š. Mišík, J. L. Holuby, B. G. Bogatyriov (Hlôšková, 2009).

Genre theory

As I have already mentioned above, for J. Michálek the material starting-points for a theoretical consideration of the issue of genology were narratives with the theme of the First and Second World Wars. These are narratives making up part of historical memory, either of contemporaries of military events who might have been, but did not have to be, direct participants, or passed down synchronously or diachronously as part of the oral tradition.

The power of the depicted theme also fed into the professional growth of folk studies. Put simply, we could state that folk studies "discovered" narratives with the theme of personal history at the point when they shifted their interest in the bearer from the group to the individual, when in addition to tra-

ditional genres living narratives appeared within the group model of the narrator's repertoire, associated with the narrator himself and the circumstances, and thus apparently unstable. Today it is already clear that in the period when attempts at national emancipation were being made in the 19th century in Europe's so-called small nations, traditional folklore served as an argument in the domain of politics and culture; it was the multi-semantic symbol of a group. The philosophical basis of that time was that of anti-feudal ideas, and the popular and plebeian classes of the population were seen as an active subject in history, the essence of the national societies which were being built. Their culture (= folklore) as an expression of the group's soul was supposed to become the source of a nationwide culture, and its symbol. It is probably also for this reason that *life narrative* (memorate) remained on the margins of the attention of researchers. At the same time, it is a paradox because among Slavs in the first half of the 19th century, the editor of Serb folk epic, V. S. Karadžić, pointed to the significance of exceptional bearers, since he based his collection (1814 – 1846) on their individual repertoires. He also pointed to their exceptional personality traits and interesting biographies. In 1871, A. F. Hilferding chose a similar approach, when he classified the texts in his publication *Onežskije byliny* by their narrators. M. Azadovský's work from 1926, *Eine sibirische Märchenerzählerin* in which he used the psychological and anthropological-functional method was a breakthrough in this direction (Krawczyk-Wasiłewska, 1980). The number of works with this approach to the bearer (R. M. Dorson, S. Witkiewicz et al.) gradually grew, until in the 1960s and 1970s several papers were published which applied various methods, often combined with photographic documentation, artistic expressions and the collector's documentation notes, to the study of the figure of the narrator. The monograph by the Finnish folklorist and regionalist J. Pentikäinen from 1978 (Pentikäinen, 1978) can be considered a breakthrough in this respect, dealing with the exceptional figure and bearer of traditional folk culture Marina Takalo, where the author combines a folkloristic and anthropological approach in his ten-year-long research. From the world of Czech folk studies, we can mention the work by the collector from southern Moravia A. Šebestová, who gave currency to the term *lidské dokumenty* [folk documents] (in addition to traditional folklore genres, she also recorded and published narratives from everyday life and life stories) (Šebestová, 1947).

In Slovak folkloristics, it was not until the middle of the 20th century that M. Kosová was the first theoretically devoted to this genre, and in 1971 (Kosová, 1958), with the aforementioned monograph by J. Michálek (1971) and summarily G. Kiliánová (1992).

In Slovak folk studies, it was only in the mid-20th century that M. Kosová (1958) became the first person to deal with the theory of this genre, followed by J. Michálek in 1971 with his above-mentioned monograph, and then by G. Kiliánová (1992). M. Kosová put to good use her knowledge acquired from

field research in the Slav seminar of the Faculty of Arts of Comenius University from 1928-1942 under the supervision of F. Wollman (Gašparíková, 1993, 2001, 2004; Hlôšková, 2006). The idea of several years of systematic research on the territory of the whole of Slovakia was based on the principle of a creative figure in relation to his/her living environment. G. Kiliánová devoted herself in detail to developing criteria for memory-based narration as an autonomous genre.

The professionalization of social science subjects, and thus intensified ethnographic, linguistic, as well as folkloristic, research at the beginning of the 20th century brought to light a living narrative repertoire, in which narrative about life was a living part, both from the point of view of quantity, and mainly from the semantic point of view.

The classification viewpoint, driven by an attempt to systematise knowledge, is, as we know, a theoretical construct. Although it is clear to us those humans are effectively also *homo narrans* and naturally try to share their experience, feelings and knowledge with others, regardless of being (un)aware of their narrative's genre characteristic, it is still possible to find certain stable and invariant elements which differentiate these narratives from others.

Memory-based narrative as a dynamic phenomenon of culture came into being probably owing to its association with a more intimate social framework; traditional genres (fairy tale, legend, myth) talked about group ambitions, actions or losses. Memory-based narrative individualises these topics. If the hero in the traditional group is the collective (an individual hero also symbolises the group), then in memory-based narrative, it is the individual who struggles with fate and circumstances. Dealing with fate and circumstances is the core of the action/story or its birth in a narrative form.

Even in the Slovak folk studies of the 20th century, tendencies linked in many ways to the research tradition of the 19th century continued to exist, with non-scientific goals at the forefront when formulating collection plans. At its beginnings, the study of oral prose was centrist in terms of textology, as well as selective: traditional "crystallised" genres – the fairy tale and legend – were at the centre of interest (Michálek, 1996). We can state that it was only the linguist S. Czambel, a researcher focusing on positivism, who gave an image of the whole breadth of the contemporary narrative repertoire at the beginning of the 20th century with his recording of texts (Žeňuchová, 2009). During the next stage of development of folk studies in Slovakia, it was only researchers in the second half of the 20th century – M. Kosová-Kolečányi, J. Michálek, M. Leščák (Leščák, 2010)¹², V. Gašparíková, G. Kiliánová – who worked fully on

¹² The publication was cited until its publication as a manuscript. M. Leščák in fact defended a thesis with the same name in 1971.

the theory of such hitherto neglected genres as humoristic narrative, life-based or memory-based narrative.

As I have already mentioned, from the point of view of the theory of the memorate, the publication by J. Michálek (1971) is a fundamental work in the history of Slovak folk studies; it also involved J. Michálek in the contemporary discussion of the definition of the subject of folk studies research. His research field was mainly the Podbradlansko and Podjavorinsko region, but he also attempted to find natural narrative situations, drawing on the need to have “plentiful and reliable material” as a starting-point” (Michálek, 1971, pp. 9-10). He was interested in the contemporary situation of traditional culture in relation to the social and educational composition of the rural environment studied, which was reflected in the thematic and genre composition of the narrative repertoire. From the perspective of the material examined, the principal chapter is “Memory-based narrative on the world wars” (Michálek, 1971, pp. 56-100). The narrators also included people born in the second half of the 19th century, and the research carried out at the beginning of the 1970s showed that “the number of these stories is still today [the year of its publication – note by HH] relatively high, and very varied in terms of motifs” (Michálek, 1971, p. 67). The author – innovatively for that period – states that memory-based narrative on the topic of the First World War can also be used as reliable sociological source to understand the attitude of the popular masses to the First World War, and in general to war overall (Michálek, 1971, p. 59). for which present-day folk studies used the term of philosophy of history. J. Michálek also analysed memories and narratives about the Second World War, pointing out from the perspective of the ecology of folklore the importance of “bringing back to life” narrations which are so-called commemorative occasions (for example during celebrations of the Slovak National Uprising etc.), where the content and formal expression of the narratives often help put the finishing touches to how the topic of war is dealt with in literature, film and drama.

The contribution of J. Michálek’s work from the perspective of genre theory and poetics lies in the terminological specification and definition of category properties for the subgroups of memorates, namely *rozprávanie zo života* [life-based narration] and *spomienkové rozprávanie* [memory-based narration]. J. Michálek followed on from previous researchers (J. Polívka, A. Melicherčík, M. Kosová) and applied the point of view of the narrator, with an emphasis on the content and formal structure of the narrative. He points to the processuality of the narrative creative process when “...the primary meaning of life-based narrative, of monitoring autobiographical versions lies in the opportunity to examine the creative process...”, where “this material makes the issue of the individual and the collective in the creative folk/art process very topical” (Michálek, 1971, p. 105). From this point of view, memory-based narration is, then, a version which is not the narrator’s immediate experience; the relation to the fact recounted is via an intermediary, at the very least at one remove, or at sev-

eral removes. It thus represents a stage of folklorisation – in time and in space – which has consequences for the content and the form of the narratives, when, for example a “historical figure in the folk’s imagination becomes the person created by the oral story” (Michálek, 1971, p. 110). And in the end, J. Michálek’s statement on field research as a condition *sine qua non* of folk studies is still relevant today, for example in discussions on the disappearance or development of folklore and on its functions in contemporary people’s system of values” (Michálek, 1971, p. 130).

A few personal words in conclusion

I was a student of Professor J. Michálek’s from 1974 to 1978, and he was also my supervisor when writing my master thesis about so-called scenic folk narrators. I wrote my master thesis as the young mother of my son Adam; for this reason, we did not have many sessions together, and they needed to be brief and constructive. I appreciated the trust which he placed in me when I was embarking on my work and understanding the issues in question. He took a calm and kind interest in my feelings as a mother, and about how my son was faring. He was pleased with the result of my studies, as he also told my husband Braňo with his own special smile. A few years later, he suggested using the informal “you” form with that very same smile, causing me much embarrassment, since I still considered myself his “student”. The embarrassment passed, and all our subsequent meetings were pleasant and enriching. I am convinced that professor Janko Michálek remains in this way in the memories of many generations of his students.

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HANA HLÔŠKOVÁ (Ed.)
(2020)

MILAN LEŠČÁK – VEDEC, PEDAGÓG, ČLOVEK

[Milan Leščák – Scientist, Pedagogue, Human]

Bratislava: Ethnographic Society of Slovakia, 226 p.

The commemorative publication celebrating the 80-year jubilee of Milan Leščák contains about sixty comments of his professional colleagues and students as well as fellow companions in the field of folk culture heritage, folklorism and media. Many of these personalities are friends of the jubilarian mentioning personal memories in a nice and humorous way. Along with the scientist also the human Milan Leščák was to be praised. Out of many contributions, a selection was made here not in relation to quality but a one that should help us to present the personality of Milan Leščák in his complexity.

The first contributions of the jubilee publication reveal the scientific and pedagogical activities of the jubilarian. Gabriela Kiliánová describes his work at the Institute of Ethnology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences. Here, the scientific career of Milan Leščák began in 1963, lasting a whole of forty years. From 1976 to 1988 he was vice director and from 1989 to 2003 director of the SAV institute known later as the Institute of Ethnology (today Institute of Ethnology and Social Anthropology). Among his major scientific works the Ethnographic Atlas of Slovakia, Contributions to the Encyclopedia of Folk Culture in Slovakia and his work in contemporary folklore can be mentioned.

Between 1996 and 2004 Leščák had been working at the Chair of Ethnology (later Chair of Ethnology and cultural Anthropology, today the Chair of Ethnology and Museology) of the Faculty of Arts of the Comenius University in Bratislava as teacher and head of chair. Marta Botíková describes him as modern, inventive and reliable colleague. Apart from organizational work he had been encouraging scientific activities of the chair. Besides topics like “*Tradition, ethics and civilising transition*“, back in 1997 he had initiated a

seminar „*Woman and women's principle in folklore*“, long before that issue became topical as a result of the women's movement.

Leščák wrote a number of significant papers on folklore, folkloristics and folklorism in Slovakia. (In Slovakia, folkloristics, which dealt with the immaterial cultural heritage – the folklore, was considered a part of ethnology until 1989 – see Daniel Luther's contribution). Peter Michalovič, as many other authors as well, states that Leščák transformed the Slovak folkloristics from a descriptive to a scientific discipline, having been affected by Claud Lévi-Strauss. The foundation of the Chair of folkloristics and regional studies at the Faculty of Humanities of the Pedagogical College in Nitra was one of his peak efforts at establishing folkloristics as science.

With folklorism, Leščák dealt very intensively on theoretical as well as applied level. According to Ján Blaho „*He (...) understood the folklorism movement in Slovakia in a unique way and became its pragmatic futurologist ...*” Blaho appreciates the creative power of Leščák, who had been actually a source of ideas for the various cultural and national education institutions such as Matica Slovenská, Národné osvetové centrum, Lúčnica, etc., becoming their “*grey eminence*” at the same time.

Peter Maráky emphasizes Leščák's strong commitment to ‘applied ethnology’ in Slovakia. Leščák was co-founder, long time organizer and jury chairman of the “Etnofilm Čadca” film festival (first founded in 1980). He actively participated in the programme of the Festival of Folklorism in Východná, Detva, Myjava, Strážnice and others, often as a jury member, too. This affinity to, live folklore is not surprising, having heard from Igor Kovačovič that Milan had been a very good dancer and had even won a ‘Verbuňk’ dance competition at a Folklore festival in Strážnice in 1967. (Verbuňk is a traditional dance from Moravian Slovakia).

However, Milan Leščák is also known as a gifted singer, as many congratulators found out, among them Ján Botík. He also remembers their common field research in the years of study, having experienced a lot of funny situations. Also, the many common visits of wine cellars were quite amusing, Botík reports, since Milan had been often singing there. Daniel Luther also has had many humorous memories of field research, often having started in a pub. Luther, the first PhD. student of Leščák and his long term friend, emphasizes his human qualities: „*Witty, a gifter narrator and singer, with scientific intuition and a unconventional pragmatism*“.

Several contributions of former students (Katarina Košťalová, Ivan Murin, Martina Bocánová, Katarina Babčáková and others) reveal an image of an extraordinary teacher and human, who was able to convey his knowledge about European folklore, folklore and folklorism as well as folklorism and literature to the young generation with high competence and excellence. He was appreciated for his friendly and sympathetic humour as well as banter (e.g. *Keď kú-*

zelný pomocník pomáhá aj Iróniou from Zuzana Veselská and Ľubica Voľanská).

Oľga Danglová reminds of Leščáks efforts at international scientific cooperation and contacts, chiefly to Moravian, Hungarian, Polish and also Austrian colleagues after border opening in 1989 (Klaus Beitzl), pointing to the encounter with Austrian colleagues in Kittsee with some good red wine. To Leščák, the search for common research interests and theoretical approaches played a chief role.

In his contribution „*Tatry Alpy. Ein Testimonium Amicitiae für Milan Leščák*“, Klaus Beitzl describes the chronology of a friendship that had begun after the opening of the borders in 1989 with spontaneous meetings of Austrian and Slovak ethnologists. Famous were the carnivals at the Institute of Ethnology in Bratislava. Soon after this wave of friendship reached wider circles, organizing excursions, also with the participation of pedagogues and students of both universities in Vienna and Bratislava. The formation of a scientific circle of friends „*Tatry Alpy*“ in 1992 in Levoča was the ultimate top event: „*Friendship, science, art and culture, humour*“ was the motto of the circle founded. The name indicates to the origin of two friends and important protagonists – Milan Leščák and Klaus Beitzl. Milan Leščák comes from the region of Zips, southeast of the High Tatras in Slovakia. Klaus Beitzl was born in Berlin, his family roots are, however, in Montafon/Voralberg in the Eastern Alps. In 1993, the formation of the circle of friends was completed at Klaus Beitzl's family seat in Schruns/Montafon. Several cooperations in the field of ethnology were initiated, friendships and educational projects were fostered by collective research journeys to Montafon, Šariš, Hoheneich in Waldviertel, Drassburg in Burgenland as well as Mödling in Industrieviertel (2008). The funny accounts of activities of this circle of friends are completed by many, not less amusing pictures. It is a pleasure to read this contribution, the more if you know all the participants.

Eventually also the work of the editor Hana Hlôšková should be acknowledged. The book comprises around sixty contributions with an extensive bibliography of the jubilarian on history of ethnography and folkloristics, the genres of folklore, folklorism and media, reports and reviews, Milan Leščák – teacher, and also contributions about Milan Leščák. This bibliography compiled by Hana Hlôšková was published within the VEGA 2/0107/19 project framework „Folklore, Folkloristics and Ideology“.

Vera Kapeller

SANDRA KREISSLOVÁ, JANA NOSKOVÁ, MICHAL PAVLÁSEK
(2019)

**„TAKOVÉ NORMÁLNÍ RODINNÉ HISTORKY“
Obrazy migrace a migrující obrazy v rodinné paměti**

[„Ordinary Family Stories”

Images of Migration and Migrating Images in Family Memory]

Praha: Argo, 424 p.

Talking about past events is one of the universal phenomena of the lives of individuals, social groups and social life in general and that is why it is one of the significant topics in ethnological research. An example is the monograph entitled "Ordinary Family Stories" in which the authors pay attention to the process of creating and intergenerational imparting stories about migration experiences within families. The intention of the authors was to determine the contents of family stories, to record their changes in generational interpretations and to reveal the mechanisms and strategies of family remembrance.

The authors followed the specifics of these processes on the example of three-generation families in four selected social groups which are connected by the (in)direct experience of the oldest generation with forced or voluntary international migration in the post-war period. The first group of narrators belongs to the German minority living in the Czech Republic, the second group to the Czech minority living in Croatia. The other two groups of narrators belong to the displaced Germans from Czechoslovakia and to the displaced Czechs from the area of today's Croatia. In the course of the oral-historical research, the authors moved within the territory of three countries – the Czech Republic, Germany and Croatia.

The monograph is the result of a three-year project focused on family memory. It contains ten chapters, but we can further divide them into five main sections. The authors are three ethnologists who to some extent follow up on

their previous research interests. Memory problematics is no stranger to any of them. In their previous research they also focused methodologically on the oral history method and the biographical method. Sandra Kreisslová and Jana Nosková have long been dealing with the history and (memorial) culture of Czech Germans. Michal Pavlásek, who was dealing with issues of migration and the Czech minority in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe suitably complements the pair of authors.

The first part of the monograph (Chapters I to IV) is theoretical; it introduces concepts and terms related to memory, remembrance, migration, family, and generation with which the authors continue to work in the analysis and interpretation of family stories. The key theoretical starting point for the authors was the assumption "about the social and cultural conditionality of memory and perception of the family as an entity that carries a specific social framework within which past events are present and relived through communication" (p. 13). It is based on the work of the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs on collective memory.

In the second part of the monograph (Chapter V), the authors bring readers closer to how the data collection took place in the fieldwork and at the same time draw their attention to the limitations they encountered in its implementation. They focus, for example, on ensuring the plurality of research methods used; (non)meeting research expectations regarding the sample of narrators; external/internal factors influencing the meetings with the narrators and the course of the biographical interview itself; the role of gatekeeper and researchers; the relationship between the researcher and the respondent; pitfalls of the multilingual and the interethnic research or the ethnographic research itself.

The next part of the monograph (Chapters VI to VIII) places the monitored social groups in a broader socio-historical context. In it, the authors provide a comprehensive view of historical events and processes which, according to them, also had an impact on the formation of their group identity and memory. They also do not omit interpretations of these events and processes by the representatives of the social groups and their nation states. In the penultimate part of the monograph (Chapter IX), the authors demonstrate the functioning of family memory on the example of four families, evenly represented from each social group. Individual families are the separate case studies in which the authors identify the contents and functions of family stories and show what strategies and mechanisms for passing on family stories have been used between the generations. At the end of the monograph (Chapter X), the authors compare these individual case studies looking for similarities and differences between the memorial societies. At the same time, they interconnect their interpretations with the socio-historical context of social groups. The monograph is structured logically, clearly and written in an engaging style, and I believe

that it meets all the prerequisites to appeal to the widest possible range of readers.

Dominika Lešková

This text was created as output within the grant project MŠ SR VEGA č. 1/0194/20 Morálne naratívy o náboženských a etnických skupinách vo vyučovaní vybraných predmetov na základných školách [Moral narratives about religious and ethnic groups in the teaching of selected subjects in primary schools].

MARIANNA ORAVCOVÁ
(2020)

AKCIA B

[Action B]

*Bratislava: Ústav pamäti národa [The National Memory Institute],
303 p.*

In Slovak historiography, several researchers in the social sciences are focusing on important topics related to the historical development of society after the Second World War. The awareness of the “obligation” to fill the “gaps” in the social and political history of Slovakia has prompted researchers to return to events that took place more than seven decades ago. These gaps emerged as a result of several factors, such as the fact that until the end of the 1990s many events were “banned” topics in social science writing at academic centres and universities. In addition, these topics have long been absent from the public media, popular scholarly literature, and film production. This situation persisted as a result of political control exercised systematically with the intention of forbidding the publication of certain information that would compromise the government and the political regime. Such topics included the post-war political situation in the 1950s, when after the parliamentary elections in 1948 the Communist Party seized political power in Czechoslovakia.

It took more than four decades for Czechoslovak society to be presented with an image of the cruel reality of political persecution, which has been preserved in extensive document collections and archives. Most of them were marked as “secret and top secret”, which meant they were not publicly available for consultation or later for research purposes. Unfortunately, the testimonies of direct witnesses, who were often accused of seditious activities, have only rarely been preserved. Ethnologists have confirmed that in the course of their research, there were several topics that were traumatising for their respon-

dents. Understandably, memories of this type were generally not retold even within the family circle.

It was not until the late 1990s that these events came to light in Marianna Oravcová's pilot study *Správa o očiste* [A report on the purge] published in 1992. She continued in her research, focusing on events related to the involuntary resettlement of people from Slovak cities such as Bratislava, Nitra, and Košice to the countryside. Her endeavours resulted in an extensive publication entitled *Akcia B* [Action B], which was published in 2020 by the National Memory Institute in Bratislava. The title is derived from the initial letter of the word "byt" (meaning "apartment" in English). The word "action" refers to the systematic organized involuntary abandonment of people's flats, or even houses, and the eviction of city inhabitants to the countryside. In addition to being involuntarily (by law provision of so called "unreliable person" designed for this purpose) resettled from their own homes, citizens were ordered to settle in a remote rural location and carry out manual labour in a particular enterprise (especially in the fields of manufacturing and construction or in stone quarries). When assigning new jobs to the evicted, the authorities did not take into account their original vocational training and education, even though the majority of the persecuted had completed university studies in various specialisations. On the contrary, they were exclusively assigned manual jobs despite their high level of education. The written order to carry out forced manual labour was an example of how the authorities disregarded applicable international conventions such as the Convention Concerning Forced or Compulsory Labour adopted in 1930 by the General Assembly of the International Labour Organization in Geneva.

The notion of the "purge of society", which was also used by the author in her earlier work (Oravcová, 1992), is incorporated as a leitmotif throughout the chapters of the publication, which is documented by specific archival materials from eight state institutions and materials from the family archives of those that were affected by the evictions.

The first chapter, *Cez ľudovú demokraciu k diktatúre proletariátu* [From popular democracy to the dictatorship of the proletariat], presents the readers with depicting the post-war atmosphere and the efforts of the political authorities to "purify" the cities of people who the incoming political regime saw as the "class enemy". They declared that their parallel goal was to find a solution to the inadequate housing capacities in the cities. However, as the documented resolutions of the supreme party authorities made clear, the reason behind the advertised increased efforts to address the housing problems was not primarily the improvement of urban housing conditions. On the contrary, the primary motive was the acquisition of suitable and often prestigious housing for the new rising generation, which, according to the parties' committees, was to create a "new society" in the aftermath of the February 1948 coup d'état. In the

propaganda rhetoric, families that were involuntarily resettled from the cities were referred to as “flawed”, “unreliable”, “unwanted”, or “former people” (“byv-shiye ljudi” in Russian) and were replaced by politically reliable individuals from a rural and working-class backgrounds. These often Communist Party members individuals usually lacked the education necessary to carry out the roles which they were appointed to by the party authorities. The legal validity of these decisions was meant to be supported externally by the rapid development of new legal standards and political competencies in all positions of state leadership.

This approach, based on the principles of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, was intended to be an instrument of the class struggle aimed at achieving popular democracy and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The second chapter, *Zákonné neprávno* [Legal injustice], uses specific examples to demonstrate how the legal system in Czechoslovakia was transformed. It was done in line with the party’s goals, decisions, and repressive policies against its political opponents, who the implementers of these changes referred to as “entrepreneurs and exploiters”. These umbrella terms referred to people who opposed the political regime. However, it was not possible to appeal against the party’s decisions. The newly-established legal system enabled the division of flats according to the established “hierarchy” of the state institutions (Oravcová, 2020: 185).

The third chapter, *Mimosúdne perzekúcie* [Extrajudicial persecutions], describes the process of the “purge of society”. This process took place from the spring to the autumn of 1948 through a series of comprehensive investigations of state and public employees. Shortly afterwards, another provision was introduced stipulating that pensioners and the clergy of all churches could also be prosecuted for so-called seditious activity. Prosecution also took place in the universities, targeting both lecturers and students who were expelled and then enrolled in manufacturing and retraining courses. The accused individuals were hit by sanctions usually relating to their profession or career, such as the loss of employment or early retirement. There were also some cases where individuals voluntarily applied for work in manufacturing for fear of persecution. However, the compiled list of “enemies” was subject to further sanctions even after the phase of massive purges.

The fourth chapter, called *Akcia B – ako byty* [Action B – as in flats], is the most extensive in terms of content and the number of published documents on the process of removing people from the cities. It described the stages of preparation and the implementation of evictions, which began to take place on 15 July 1952. The subchapter *Zvláštna komisia* [Special commission] merits some attention as it described how this commission was responsible for the distribution of replacement dwellings for those evicted to rural settlements. The commission was composed of members of the competent branches of the

government, starting with the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovakia and finishing with the State Security, whose role was to “exert pressure on isolated victims and disregard any consideration of the legal framework or the provision of living conditions for those evicted” (Oravcová, 2020). This is also evidenced by the allocated dwellings, which were in an unsatisfactory condition and often without electricity, water and sanitary facilities. The size of the living area (comprising one room with a kitchen) was much more modest than in these people’s original homes, as evidenced by numerous archival documents. Allocated dwellings were often quite remote and had poor access to the designated place of work. This meant a tedious journey to work in the early morning and from work in the late evening. The motions and justification of the reasons for the eviction did not even find their way into the hands of the people concerned, and it was after 1992 that they got the opportunity to read these materials (Oravcová, 2020).

The decision adopted by the Central Committee of the Communist Party on 4 September 1953 (six months after Stalin’s and Gottwald’s deaths) put an end to the long, bitter, and unjust persecution of families and individuals. This chapter also contains a valuable analysis called *Sociologická sonda* [A sociological probe] dealing with Slovak society in the 1940s and 1950s that was carried out on the basis of lists of people and families evicted from Bratislava. Statistical data show that the political persecutions that took place in the 1950s affected two generations. Less than ten percent were protected from these sanctions. The severance of social, professional, neighbourhood, and family ties was particularly difficult for those evicted but also affected those who remained in the city.

Despite several inconsistencies in official documents, which were later rectified following the appeals of those affected, Oravcová concludes that these evictions caused a significant change and rupture in the social and economic structure of the Slovak middle class, which over the course of two decades between the two world wars was formed mainly from people from the agrarian and working-class environments of Bratislava and other cities and replaced by a new party “elite”.

The fifth part of the publication, entitled *Ponovembrový postoj k perzekúciám z 50. rokov* [The post-November stance on the 1950s persecutions], provides a glimpse of the somewhat successful and the unsuccessful methods and results of compensation for persecutions, forced evictions, and forced labour from 1956 to 1968. It was only after the events of November 1989 that more favourable opportunities were created for initiatives to be set up by individuals and the Slovak Helsinki Committee, which was established in 1990. Oravcová also joined this committee. Within the committee, a working group was established in 1992 with the intent to thoroughly analyse materials documenting persecutions. Despite the presented material, those affected were not granted

any significant moral and civic satisfaction desired and even after 1989 did not receive any financial compensation for their forced labour.

In the 1990s, the issues presented by Oravcová as a part of the historiography of the social sciences in Slovakia caught the attention of several Slovak ethnologists who carried out their own research (Salner, 1998; Ratica, 1991; Darulová, 2013; Janto, 2017).

The content, scope, and exemplary and precise scholarly interpretation of the issue, based upon the study of the archive documentation, testify to an effort to make this matter accessible and to capture the experiences of the third generation of families of those affected, which is something historical memory tends to overlook.

This is reminiscent of Hannah Arendt's observation in *Sloboda a politika* [Freedom and politics] (Arendt, 1958, p. 694): "We know from our experience with totalitarian governments that the gift of freedom may be destroyed, or rather that we must be apprehensive about it being destroyed."

Magda Paríková

MARTIN HOMZA AND ŽELJKO HOLJEVAC (Eds.)
(2020)

**SLOVÁCI A CHORVÁTI NA CESTE
K SAMOSTATNOSTI:
HISTÓRIA A PERSPEKTÍVY**

[Slovaci i Hrvati na putu u neovisnost:
Povijest i perspektive]

[Slovaks and Croats on the Road to Independence:
History and Perspectives]

Bratislava: Slovensko-chorvátska komisia humanitných vied

Studia Carpathico-Adriatica Vol. I., 206 p.

The first edited book of the *Studia Carpathico-Adriatica* series, entitled *Slováci a Chorváti na ceste k samostatnosti: História a perspektívy/Slovaci i Hrvati na putu u neovisnost: Povijest i perspektive* [Slovaks and Croats on the Road to Independence: History and Perspectives], contains eleven separate chapters and eight other contributions in the reports and reviews section. The book is based on presentations from a conference that was held on 18 and 19 June 2019. The conference was organised by the Slovak-Croatian Commission of Humanities, which had been established under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research, and Sport of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Croatia. The organisers included Professor Martin Homza from the Department of Slovak History at the Faculty of Arts of Comenius University and Professor Željko Holjevac from the University of Zagreb. The scholarly output of the commission is this peer-reviewed edited book, which was published in 2020 as the first volumes of the *Studia Carpathico-Adriatica* series. The book's title evokes a feeling of connection between two historical regions of Europe. As Homza said in his introduc-

tory speech, two international conferences that had previously been held on the topic of Slovak – Croatian historical relations were forerunners for the long-term academic cooperation between these two countries, and two edited books were published on that occasion.

This book comprises chapters as well as reports and reviews. The introduction was written by the leading figures of the commission: Homza, who focused on earlier history and medieval connections, and Holjevac, who discussed recent history and modern connections. The commission features six Slovak and six Croatian members and was formed to cover different fields in the most important areas of the humanities, notably general history, literary history, the history of art, neo-Latin studies, archaeology, and ethnology.

The activities of the commission and the publication of this book, in the authors' own words, aim to establish connections and find historical parallels between Slovaks and Croats which have been overlooked since the end of the Second World War.

The first conference organised by the commission took place on 18 June 2019 at the Faculty of Arts of Comenius University. The title of this book was chosen to highlight the historical parallels between Slovaks and Croats in recent history in their long struggle for independence and indicates that the chapters within it will largely revolve around historical themes. The chapters focus mainly on recent periods in both countries and the emancipation of the two nations at the end of the 1980s and in the early 1990s, also dealing with the emergence of the two independent states. There are certain parallels present in the book that attempt to highlight Slovak – Croatian relations in the twentieth century, which is something that has long been overlooked within the academic community. Ondrej Podolec's chapter *Štátoprávne milníky Slovenska v 20. storočí (paralely s Chorvátskom)* [Milestones in the development of the constitutional legal status of Slovakia (parallels with Croatia)] raises the topic of similarities in the search for the new and independent existence of the Slovak and Croatian nations in the new realities that resulted from the collapse of the multinational state of Austria-Hungary. Emília Hrabovec described the initial political position of the Slovak exile community following the end of the Second World War in *Slovenský exil a cesta k nezávislosti Slovenska* [Slovak exiles and the road to Slovakia's independence]. This chapter focuses on the exiled figures Karol Sidor and Ferdinand Ďurčanský and their struggles with the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia as well as the intrigues of foreign intelligence agencies. Slovak exiles had a more difficult starting position in the international community as there was no geopolitical interest in their part of the pre-war Czechoslovak Republic. In addition to these problems, the Slovak exiles led a long-lasting struggle with Czech ones. In *Kontakty slovenského a chorvátskeho politického exilu v 70. a 80. rokoch* [Contacts between Slovak and Croatian political exiles in the 1970s and 1980s], Peter Jašek also

examines Slovak political exiles, elaborating on the establishment of the Slovak World Congress and the history of the exile community, which has thus far received little scholarly attention. As Slovaks were unable to stand on their own two feet within the geopolitical situation of that time, they had to seek support from non-national and international organisations, particularly those focusing on Central and Eastern European countries. In this regard, Jašek draws attention to the Slovak World Congress in Toronto in 1971, where the idea of cooperation between exiled Slovaks and Croats began to take shape.

A crucial period of liberation in Czechoslovakia, which preceded the Prague Spring and had far-reaching consequences for society, is highlighted in *Slovensko v predjarí* (1963 – 1967) [Slovakia's early spring (1963 – 1967)]. This is written by Miroslav Londák and Elena Londáková.

The difficult path to Croatian independence is documented by Nikica Barić in *Hrvatski put u samostalnost* [Croatia's road to independence], which focuses on the period of the late 1980s and early 1990s, when nationalist movements were on the rise and political unrest escalated in Yugoslavia. The Catholic Church played a major role in the creation of the independent states of Croatia and Slovakia, because both countries, alongside some other Central European ones, are strongly Christian and have a predominantly Catholic population. This issue was highlighted in Julija Barunčić Pletikosić's chapter *Uloga Katoličke crkve u stvaranju suvremene Republike Hrvatske* [The role of the Catholic Church in creating the modern republic of Croatia]. Additional parallels can be found in Tomáš Černák's *Politická situácia a prejavy násilia na futbalových štadiónoch na začiatku 90. rokov v Chorvátsku a na Slovensku* [The political situation and acts of violence at football stadiums in the early 1990s in Croatia and Slovakia]. Football stadiums were major sites of unrest for both countries during that period, as tense relations between different ethnicities came to the surface in sport. These situations sometimes led to very bad outcomes, and in Croatia they reflected the difficult relations that were present in society. Beáta Katrebová Blehová attempts to depict the issue of the dissolution of Czechoslovakia and the emergence of separate sovereign states in *Rozdelenie Česko-Slovenska v medzinárodnom kontexte: náčrt problematiky* [The dissolution of Czechoslovakia in the international context: an outline of the issue]. Possibly the most sensitive topic in the history of Croatia was raised by Ana Holjevac Tuković in *Završetak Domovinskog rata u Hrvatskoj: Vojne operacije i mirna reintegracija* [The end of the Croatian homeland war: military operations and peaceful reintegration]. The fact that Croatian foreign policy had started to shift more towards the West is highlighted by Albert Bing in *Put Hrvatske u Europsku uniju* [Croatia's journey to the European Union]. Both Slovakia and Croatia went to great efforts to integrate themselves into the European community. Bing explains the countries' motives and efforts to converge with the West during the early 1990s. The issues of coping with the past and interpretations of national history are common themes for both Slovaks

and Croats. These issues are raised by Aleksandar Jakir in *Izazov bavljenja problematicnom prošlošću u Hrvatskoj* [The challenge of dealing with a difficult past in Croatia].

The reports and reviews section includes Ján Botík's review of the ethnographic monograph *Barvy chorvatské Moravy* [The colours of Croatian Moravia], examining a community about which very little has been written in recent decades, and Ondřej Větchovský's review of Boris Moskovič's historical monograph *Mezi Titem a Tudjmanem: Chorvatsko v letech 1989 – 1990* [Between Tito and Tudjman: Croatia in 1989 – 1990]. Zvonko Taneski has a review of Dubravka Ugrešić's literary work *Baba Jaga zniešla vajce* [Baba Yaga laid an egg]. Martin Homza provides a report entitled *Slovenská historička v chorvátskej encyklopédii Kvetoslava Kučerová* [The Slovak historian Kvetoslava Kučerová in the Croatian Encyclopaedia], which examines the life and work of that prominent Slovak historian, who passed away at the end of 2019 after a life devoted to research and publications on Croats and Serbs in Slovakia. Andrej Solár presents a report on the activities of the Museum of Croatian Culture in Slovakia, which is one of eight national museums within the Slovak National Museum. This work is related to his article *Tamo daleko, daleko od mora / Ferdinand Takáč* [There, far away, far from the sea: Ferdinand Takáč], which discusses the life and work of one of the most prominent figures among Slovak Croats in the twentieth century. The book concludes with an essay presenting the final theses of students of Croatian Studies at the Department of Slavic Philology and a summary of important Slovak events in Croatia in 2019 written by Zuzana Chudá. This section also provides space for informative contributions for readers in both countries. The book includes a collection of photographs taken at conferences held in Slovakia and Croatia and the launches of relevant publications.

Although the founding members of the commission are historians and the first issue of the *Studia Carpathico-Adriatica* series focuses on historical works, the very composition of the commission is also a signal that future conference topics and publications will include scholarly works focusing on different fields in the humanities. The first conference and the book reviewed here have certainly sought to highlight what Croats and Slovaks have in common and what unites them. The individual chapters overlap to some extent in terms of the historical milestones of these two nations in the turbulent years of the twentieth century.

Andrej Solár

VIOLETTA WRÓBLEWSKA (Ed.)
(2018)

SŁOWNIK POLSKIEJ BAJKI LUDOWEJ

[Polish Folk Tale Dictionary]

Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UMK
Vols. 1 – 3

online version: Słownik polskiej bajki ludowej
(<http://bajka.umk.pl>)

A folk tale is an essential part of spiritual and cultural heritage as it reflects the knowledge and aspects of the faith of our ancestors; it popularizes universal life experiences and archetypal schemes. This genre of literary folklore has been at the centre of attention of collectors, scholars, writers, and artists, who all consider it a rich source of inspiration. The peer-reviewed *Słownik polskiej bajki ludowej* [Polish Folk Tale Dictionary], compiled by a fifteen-member team led by Violetta Wróblewska, has highlighted the importance of the folk tale in the genre spectrum of the storytelling tradition and particularly its nature. The goal of these endeavours was to present the most relevant information about the Polish folk tale in terms of its tradition in the folk environment, its format, the most common topics and motifs, and the important researchers and collectors in the field. Up to now, there have been no synthetic compilation endeavours in Polish folklore focusing specifically on folk-tale genres. *Słownik folkloru polskiego* [A Dictionary of Polish Folklore] by Julian Krzyżanowski (1963) and *Słownik symboli i stereotypów ludowych* [A Dictionary of Folk Symbols and Stereotypes] (Volume 1, published in 1996), which was compiled under the guidance of Jerzy Bartmiński and Stanisława Niebrzegowska-Bartmińska at the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, are often used in folklore and ethnolinguistic research in the Polish academic environment.

The dictionary does not manage to cover all the issues related to the oral tradition; however, its analysis of cross-sectional topics allows for a relatively comprehensive picture of Polish folk tales that points out their characteristics and regional differences, and indeed the influence of folk tales on culture and literature within the context of their historical evolution. It is for this reason that each entry, in addition to the initial characterization of the source material (mostly dating to the 19th and 20th centuries) and its interpretation, also contains references to regional differences if they are relevant in terms of the nature of the sources. At the end of each entry, the reader finds information about the use of the motif or syuzhet beyond the boundaries of folklore, such as in literature, films, and theatre plays.

The dictionary contains 276 entries arranged alphabetically and divided into four parts: researchers and collectors of Polish folk tales; theoretical matters – poetics and anthropology; common syuzhets and motifs; and the relationship of folk tales to other cultural phenomena. The selection of entries was based on several factors, and the frequency of individual motifs in the Polish storytelling tradition played an important role. In the dictionary, readers will find entries about the most famous European fairy-tale motifs, such as Sleeping Beauty and Little Red Riding Hood; they will also have the opportunity to get acquainted with the specifics of their own region. To supplement the theoretical premises, the authors added original quotes from folk tales from various Polish regions and border areas to the individual entries. In terms of the academic use of the dictionary, it is particularly important that there is a bibliography of sources and secondary literature at the end of each entry so that the reader can verify the information presented and expand their knowledge. The quotes from folk tales are presented in their original form, the only exception being the texts written down by ethnographers whose phonetic versions were simplified in order to comply with current readership standards. The online version of this peer-reviewed publication includes a search engine for words and terms contained in the names and content of the individual entries, and this is of invaluable benefit for readers.

In terms of the methodology and approach to its compilation, it should be noted that Krzyżanowski's *Polska bajka ludowa w układzie systematycznym* formed the basis of the dictionary. The authors adhered to the international classification of fairy-tale syuzhets and provided the number and a description of the syuzhet type (for example: T 333 Little Red Riding Hood; AT 333 in Western catalogues, ATU 333 in the latest version). The dictionary also includes syuzhets that were published after 1960 which could not have been included in Krzyżanowski's catalogue, which was published in 1962 and 1963. The authors of the individual entries also accessed unpublished sources stored in archives and museums in Poland (including in Kolbuszowa, Kraków, Rzeszów, Toruń, and Warsaw) as well as the archives of the Polskie Towarzystwo Ludoznawcze in Wrocław and materials stored in the archives of the Zakładzie

Folklorystyki i Literatry Popularnej Katedry Kulturoznawstwa at Nicolaus Copernicus University (now known as the Department of Cultural Studies at the Institute of Cultural Studies in Toruń). Online sources from ongoing field research have also been taken into account. The collection of authors followed the concept of the genre demarcation of folk tales, which was first introduced by Krzyżanowski in his catalogue. In accordance with this concept, folk tales can be perceived in a broad sense as a recurring tradition of folk narration that is structured, schematic, variable, and anonymous. Folk tales are an umbrella term for numerous folk literary genres, including magical fairy tales and animal fairy tales; novella-style, aetioloical, humorous, anecdotal, and legendary (religious) fairy tales; and legends in superstitious, local, and historical formats. Philological and anthropological approaches in particular were used in the analysis and description of specific syuzhets. The combination of both methods thus opened up an optimal opportunity for the authors to present the composition and poetics of folk tales, highlighting the cultural significance of the story for traditional communities. In the case of certain syuzhets, conclusions based on other approaches were also presented. These highlighted the broad possibilities of the interpretation of traditional folklore communication as well as its topicality. The fact that folk-tale syuzhets and motifs have been popular and widespread in culture to this day is also evidenced by the history of their extensive and multi-faceted research in the past as well as in the present.

This three-volume dictionary provides researchers and others with the most important (although not entirely comprehensive) information about Polish folk tales in one place. Due to its trans-regional and intercultural nature, Polish folk tales are not perceived as being limited. As a result of its complexity and synthetic nature, the dictionary will be of use to folklorists, ethnologists, and museologists, and it will also enrich the research paradigm of literary science and other related academic disciplines. It can be a useful guide in the educational activities of Polish language teachers (in Poland as well as abroad), the employees of regional museums, and activity organizers. It can also be used as a foundation for therapists who use folk tales as a means of healing as well as for cultural studies scholars looking for references to folk tales in theatre plays and in films. The dictionary becomes all the more important once it is taken into account that folk tales – an important part of cultural heritage – seldom appear in the repertoire of respondents during field research. The concept of the dictionary elaborated in this way aims to present Polish folk tales and their components as a complex cultural phenomenon in both the national and international contexts.

Katarína Žeňuchová

**AN UPDATE ON THE ACTIVITIES
OF THE COMMISSION OF SLAVIC FOLKLORE
AT THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE
OF SLAVISTS
(2018 – 2023)**

At the fifth International Committee of Slavists in Sofia in 1963, a commission was launched to coordinate research on Slavic folklore and bring together folklorists from various Slavic and non-Slavic countries. It was established as the Commission for Research on Slavic Folklore, and its first chairperson was the Czech folklorist and philologist Karel Horálek (1908 – 1993), who served as the head of the commission until 1983. Throughout its history, it was led by several prominent folklorists, including Viktor Evgenievich Gusev (1983 – 1998) and Krzysztof Wrocławski, who alongside the Slovak folklorist Viera Gašparíková led the commission from 1998 to 2003; Ljubinko Radenković (2003 – 2013) and Andrej Borisovič Moroz (2013 – 2018) then followed in this role. Since 2018 the activities of the commission have been managed by Dejan Ajdačić as chairperson in cooperation with the presiding committee. Together they have determined the scope of the commission's activities for a five-year period between two Slavist conventions – the 16th Congress in Belgrade (2018) and the 17th Congress in Paris (2023) – where the results of international teams are presented at individual panels accredited to the International Committee of Slavists.

In August 2018, the commission recorded 115 registered members, including seven honorary ones. Chairperson Ajdačić, in cooperation with the presiding committee, decided to review registered members based on their activities in the field of folklore research. Several were elected honorary members, and inactive members were deregistered. The commission currently has sixty-nine active members and eighteen honorary ones, including eight representatives from non-Slavic countries, such as Germany (2), Israel (1), Lithuania (1), France (1), Canada (1), Romania (1), and Japan (1).

Since 1988 the commission has published a newsletter called *Slavistická folkloristika* [Slavic folklore studies] which is put together by the Jan Stanislav Institute of Slavistics and the Institute of Ethnology and Social Anthropology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences under the guidance of executive editors Katarína Žeňuchová and Hana Hlôšková (the online version is available at <http://www.slavu.sav.sk/casopisy/folkloristika.php>). This newsletter provides information on the commission's activities, new publications, ongoing research, and conferences to all Slavic folklorists.

The creation of a separate commission website was a significant step in improving the quality of the exchange of information between folklorists. Its concept and content are prepared and continuously updated by Ajdačić and the website can be accessed at <http://slavika.org/folklor/>. The website is available in three languages (Russian, Serbian, and English) and contains information about the history of the commission's activities, including information about older programmes of activities drawn up by Viktor Gusev (1989 – 1993), Ljubinko Radenković (2003 – 2013), and Andrej Toporkov (2008). The website includes profiles and bibliographies of prominent folklorists as well as numerous links to the websites of institutions, research centres, and journals dedicated to folklore research. The minutes from the presiding committee's meetings are also an important part of the website, ensuring that members and anyone else interested are well informed.

For the five-year period from 2018 to 2023, the commission has committed to focusing on the current terminological issues of narrative folklore, the relationship between folklore and ethnolinguistics, folklore studies and literature/literary science, and folklore and visual storytelling. Upon the basis of the current research priorities, a schedule of international conferences has been drawn up and cooperation on the preparation of events with folklore research institutions in several Slavic countries has been established.

The first planned conference, entitled *Словенски фолклор и књижевна фантастика* [Slavic folklore and literary fiction], took place from 27 to 29 September 2019 in the Serbian village of Tršić, the birthplace of the linguist Vuk Stefanović Karadžić. Thirty-one conference contributions in Bulgarian, Serbian, Polish, Russian, Ukrainian, and English were edited for publication by Božko Suvajdžić and Dejan Ajdačić and were subsequently published in the eighth issue of the academic series entitled *Савремена српска фолклористика*.

An international scholarly conference entitled *Питання термінології в сучасній славістичній фольклористиці* [Terminological issues in contemporary Slavic folklore studies] will take place on 19 and 20 October 2021. The conference is organised by several academic institutions, including the Rylsky Institute of Art Studies, Folklore, and Ethnology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine in cooperation with the Commission of Slavic Folklore

and the Ukrainian Committee of Slavists. The thematic pillars of the conference include contemporary approaches to terminology research, the naming of folklore genres, “folk” and “academic/professional” terminology, semantics, pragmatics, the poetics of folklore texts, folk culture, ethnocultural traditions, intangible cultural heritage, the relationship between literature and folklore, and the interdisciplinary nature of folklore research.

From the 30th of September to the 2nd of October 2022 an international conference named *Сербский фольклор и славянская фольклористика* [Serbian folklore and Slavic folkloristics] will be held in Tršič (western Serbia) as the 12th conference in the cycle *Современная сербская фольклористика* [Contemporary Serbian Folkloristics]. The conference topic covers two perspectives – the relationship between Serbs and other Slavs and the relationship between Slavs and Serbs. In cooperation with the Institute of Culture Sciences of Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń and the Folklore Department of the Committee of Ethnological Sciences of the Polish Academy of Sciences, the commission plans to hold a conference entitled *Paradygmaty folklorystyki słowiańskiej – Славянские фольклористические парадигмы* [Slavic folklore paradigms] from 27 to 29 October 2022. This academic event will focus on theoretical aspects and history of Slavic folklore, including academic paradigms of Slavic folklore research and the emergence of folklore paradigms; the role of folklorists in the formation of Slavic folklore; folklore schools and their relationship to research paradigms of related academic disciplines (e.g., ethnography, religious studies, linguistics, and archaeology); genre and national specifics; and inter-Slavic, Slavic, and non-Slavic aspects of the paradigms of Slavic folklore studies.

Folklorists are also preparing for the upcoming 17th International Congress of Slavists in Paris in 2023, where they will give presentations. Chairperson Ajdačić also announced a thematic block entitled *Диалог научных парадигм в славянской и неславянской фольклористике XX века* [The dialogue of academic paradigms in 20th-century Slavic and non-Slavic folklore studies] – featuring contributions from Katarína Anastasova, Violetta Wróblewska, Galina Kabakova, Alexander Pančenko, Nemanja Radulović, Andrej Toporkov, and Dejan Ajdačić; the decision of the International Committee of Slavists to include this thematic block in the congressional agenda will be announced by the end of August 2021.

During the pandemic, the commission’s activities were carried out through online platforms, and various interesting events took place. These events were divided into two cycles: the first was dedicated to academic lectures on a selected topic and the second was devoted to new works published by folklorists from individual countries. The aim of the cycle of three online lectures was to call attention to the existence of two parallel terminological systems and genre classifications of narrative folklore texts (both folk and academic ones). The

topic of the folk and academic naming of Slovak folklore genres was addressed by Svetlana Michajlovna Tolstaya (*Lexikon folkloristiki: metajazyk folklóru* [A lexicon of folklore studies: the meta-language of folklore]), Nemanja Radulović (*O klasifikaciji proze u srpskoj folkloristici* [The classification of prose in Serbian folklore studies]), and Ambrož Kvartić (*O mestských legendách v Slovinsku* [Urban legends in Slovenia]). The series of lectures presented various thought-provoking ideas about the relationship of the names of narrative genres in the two discourses, the peculiarities of genre naming in the different Slavic traditions, the differences in genre classifications, and the absence of genre definitions in certain national folklore studies. The cycle of book presentations was opened with a lecture by Violetta Wróblewska, who presented the three-volume dictionary entitled *Słownik polskiej bajki ludowej* [Polish Folk Tale Dictionary] (2018). The positive response from commission members and attendees led to the idea of organising this type of online events on a monthly basis. Six meetings took place, introducing more than twenty new publications by folklorists from Bulgaria, Ukraine, Poland, Russia, Croatia, Serbia, Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina, England, Canada, and the United States.

Opportunities have opened up within the commission for folklorists to collaborate in special groups focusing on a selected field of research, involving experts from at least three different countries. The focus of the groups can be linked to various issues of the theory and history of folklore studies. The groups have the opportunity to present their programmes on the commission's website. At a meeting at the end of May, the presiding committee approved the establishment of a new working group entitled *Образное (визуальное) повествование славянского фольклора* [Visual storytelling in Slavic folklore] led by Zoran Stefanović. This working group seeks to focus on various topics, including folklore research in visual literature and communication, signs and symbol systems, visual communication on frescoes and icons, folklore graphics, embroidery, comics and graphic novels, illustrated books, and caricatures. Also, the modern graphical computer interface used in animations, video games, and in the virtual world has not been neglected.

During the pandemic, the Commission of Slavic Folklore fully developed its activities, which have since moved to the online sphere. Thanks to the dedication and activities of Chairperson Ajdačić and the support of the presiding committee and members, various interesting events took place and clearly defined framework plans were developed, marking a new phase in the history of the commission.

Dejan Ajdačić and Katarína Žeňuchová

THE SLOVAK-CROATIAN COMMISSION OF HUMANITIES AT THE FACULTY OF ARTS, COMENIUS UNIVERSITY IN BRATISLAVA

On 18 and 19 June 2019, the first meeting of the Slovak-Croatian Commission of Humanities took place at Comenius University and was attended by representatives of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research, and Sport of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Croatia.

The international nature of the commission is reflected in its management body, as it is led by Professor Martin Homza from Comenius University in Bratislava and Professor Željko Holjevac from the University of Zagreb.

Several Slovak and Croatian humanities experts attended a scientific conference on the topic of “Slovaks and Croats on the Road to Independence: History and Perspectives”, which was held in the boardroom of the Scientific Board of Comenius University as part of the commission’s meeting. The conference was followed by a working session of the members of the commission.

State Secretary Oľga Nachtmannová, representing the Ministry of Education, Science, Research, and Sport of the Slovak Republic, addressed the conference delegates and members of the commission, handing over decrees of appointment to six Slovak members. The Republic of Croatia was represented by His Excellency Aleksandar Heina, the Ambassador of the Republic of Croatia in the Slovak Republic. The members and invited guests were welcomed to the university by Jozef Tancer, the Vice-Rector of Comenius University for International Relations, and Marián Zouhar, the Dean of the Faculty of Arts of Comenius University.

The participants enjoyed a performance of the *Čunovský krádel'* children’s folklore ensemble led by Mária Straková, a graduate of ethnology studies at the Faculty of Arts of Comenius University. Under her guidance, the ensemble continues to preserve and cultivate the cultural traditions of Croats in Slovakia.

In addition to approving the statutes of the Slovak-Croatian Commission of Humanities, the members of the commission also addressed the issues of setting medium-term and long-term goals as well as the possibilities of promoting their activities and results. The commission's centres in Slovakia and Croatia were set up at the Faculty of Arts of Comenius University in Bratislava and the Faculty of Arts of the University of Zagreb. The following fields were agreed upon as priority areas for cooperation in the framework of the commission's activities: general history, literary history, art history, neo-Latin studies, archaeology and ethnology.

The members agreed that a meeting in 2020 as well as a conference entitled "Intellectual Connections between Croatia and Slovakia" would take place in Croatia. Unfortunately, due to the ongoing pandemic and the resulting restrictions, this was all postponed to the following calendar year.

Nonetheless, an anthology of articles from the 2019 Bratislava conference was published in Slovak, Croatian, and English in the form of a book in the newly established series *Studia Carpathico-Adriatica Vol. I*. The articles revolved around the topic of "Slovaks and Croats on the Road to Independence: History and Perspectives" (*Slovaci i Hrvati na putu u neovisnost: Povijest i perspektive*). It was edited by Martin Homza and Željko Holjevac (Bratislava 2020).

Marta Botiková

A REPORT ON THE 21ST GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE ETHNOGRAPHIC SOCIETY OF SLOVAKIA

The 21st General Assembly of the Ethnographic Society of Slovakia (ESS) took place on 25 March 2021. Even though it is challenging to maintain contact in this strange and difficult period caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, it was possible to hold this meeting online thanks to the efforts of the General Assembly of the ESS and its chairperson Dr. Martina Bocánová.

All the more welcome was the presence of international participants, namely Dr. Jiří Woitsch from the Institute of Ethnology of the Czech Academy of Sciences and the Chairperson of the Czech Ethnological Society, Dr. Jana Pospíšilová from the Institute of Ethnology of the Czech Academy of Sciences, and Associate Professor Miroslav Válek from the Institute of European Ethnology, Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University in Brno.

The meeting opened with a presentation by Professor Zuzana Beňušková on the transformation of the ESS in the context of historical events, focusing on its institutional development through a chronological overview of important figures and activities from the early 1950s up to 1989 and on to the present. The cross-section of the activities of the ESS in all areas of its operation was accompanied by ample photo documentation, conjuring a sense of nostalgia among many.

With a short tribute, the participants honoured those ethnologists who have passed away in the past three years and whose endeavours have left a significant impact. Those who have left us include Mgr. Zuzana Profantová, CSc.; PhDr. Božena Filová, CSc.; PhDr. Irena Pišútová, CSc.; Prof. PhDr. Ján Michálek, DrSc.; PhDr. Ondrej Demo, CSc.; and Mgr. Wojciech Dudziak.

The general assembly was divided into three parts. The first part provided a summary of the activities carried out by the ESS and an evaluation of the results obtained over the last election term as well as its future prospects. The second part was dedicated to the recognition of the efforts of the members of the ESS from 2018 to 2020 in various areas and to the appointment of a new

honorary member. The third part consisted of the election of officials and members of the incoming main committee.

The activities carried out over the last election term were summarized in the comprehensive “Report on the Activities of the ESS” drawn up by Dr. Bocánová. She focused on the publication of the journal *Etnologické rozpravy* [Ethnological Debates] and the ongoing efforts of the editorial department to improve its quality, drawing attention to the problem of the financial security of the publication that has arisen from the limited sources of income of the ESS itself. As chairperson, Dr. Bocánová highlighted the activities of the committee in the field of promotion and popularization of the ESS, especially through Internet communication and the use of social networks, which also serve

as a place for the presentation of research and promotional and publication outputs of individual members of the society and its departments. The archival activities of the ESS and the development of an online library played an important part in this respect. The report also documented the involvement of the ESS in the organization of conferences, student academic activities, and the *Etnofilm Čadca* film festival alongside the society’s cooperation with partner societies domestically and abroad.

In 2018 the ESS was accredited by UNESCO as a non-government organization, stimulating its activities in the field of cultural heritage, particularly living heritage. Dr. Ľubica Voľanská and Dr. Jana Ambrózová in particular have been actively engaged in this process. Their active engagement could also help reinforce the role and status of non-profit organizations in relation to UNESCO.

The pedagogical department, led by Professor Beňušková, played an important role in the ESS in regards to the accreditation of study fields, particularly in relation to the classification of ethnology within the system of sciences. She also focused on supporting students’ academic activities, primarily as part of a nationwide presentation in the form of the Students’ Scientific Conference.

An essential factor for the smooth functioning of the ESS in various fields are finances and their management; this was very accurately and comprehensively explained in the report by the ESS treasurer, Dr. Juraj Janto. He graphically presented the sources of income and areas of expenditure using specific data. The financial management of the society was also audited by Associate Professor Katarína Košťalová and Dr. Dita Andrušková; they concluded that these has been the best financial management results thus far, highlighting in turn the improvements in the payment of membership fees and in the search for new sources of funding.

The majority of the participants’ contributions to the discussion during the meeting revolved around the need to encourage the younger generation of ethnologists in particular to join the society. What also resonated was the necessity to enhance cooperation and mutual communication between academic

and university departments and museums, cultural and educational institutions, and other centres or organizations operating in individual fields of ethnology; this was made clear by the repeated calls for the establishment of specialized working groups. A remark was made during the discussion about the need to process a professional bibliography as an important part of the informational foundation of ethnology. The IT field also plays an important role in the documentation process.

In accordance with the agenda of the general assembly, the plenum approved the updated articles of association of the ESS following a consultation process and the final incorporation and adoption of proposed changes. In the second part of the meeting, which was devoted to the results obtained and activities carried out by the ESS members, Katarína Holbová was appointed a new honorary member. With many years of active research and documentation, promotional, publishing, and organizational activities under her belt, she has significantly contributed to the shift in the understanding of ethnology both in academic circles and among the general public. She worked for many years at the Tekov Museum in Levice as an active expert in the field and she has retained her expertise even after ceasing her professional activities. The ESS also awarded prizes for academic and promotional activities carried out from 2018 to 2020.

The third part of the general assembly focused on the election of the new ESS management. The election was preceded by a speech by Dr. Katarína Popelková, who was nominated for the position of chairperson of the society; she is an academic at the Institute of Ethnology and Social Anthropology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, a member of the ESS, and a member of the editorial board of *Etnologické rozpravy*. Popelková presented her vision for the society's future, identifying the efforts to expand the active membership base and being open to establishing new working groups as key priorities which were to be determined by their clear and specific purpose.

While being a proponent of the continued publication of *Etnologické rozpravy*, Dr. Popelková suggested reconsidering its publication in printed form due to the high costs that this entailed. Her priorities as the candidate for the position of chairperson also included the further improvement of communication through the society's website and more flexibility in the publication of projects and activities. During an online round of voting by secret ballot in accordance with the ESS statutes, a new ESS chairperson, ESS treasurer, and main ESS committee were elected for a period of three years starting on 1 April 2021:

PhDr. Katarína Popelková, CSc. (the Institute of Ethnology and Social Anthropology, Slovak Academy of Sciences) – chairperson

Mgr. Dominika Lešková (the Department of Ethnology and Museology, Faculty of Arts of Comenius University) – treasurer

Members:

PhDr. Martina Bocánová, PhD. (the Western Slovak Museum, Trnava; the Department of Ethnology and Non-European Studies, Faculty of Arts of University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius)

Mgr. Miriama Bošeľová, PhD. (the Department of Ethnology and Folklore Studies, Faculty of Arts of Constantine the Philosopher University)

Mgr. Eva Dudková (the Slovak National Museum, Martin)

Mgr. Lucia Ditmarová, PhD. (the National Centre of Culture and Further Education)

Doc. PhDr. Hana Hlôšková, CSc. (the Institute of Ethnology and Social Anthropology, Slovak Academy of Sciences)

Mgr. Zuzana Panczová, PhD. (the Institute of Ethnology and Social Anthropology, Slovak Academy of Sciences)

Substitutes:

Mgr. Mária Mizeráková (the Centre for Folk Art Production)

Prof. Mgr. Katarína Slobodová Nováková, PhD. (the Department of Ethnology and Non-European Studies, Faculty of Arts of University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius)

Auditors:

Mgr. Dita Andrušková, PhD. (the Záhorie Museum, Skalica)

Mgr. Juraj Janto, PhD. (the Department of Ethnology and Museology, Faculty of Arts of Comenius University)

Once the resolution of the general assembly was approved by the ESS plenary, all of the activities on the meeting agenda were completed. All relevant documents and evaluation reports will be made available on the society's website at www.nss.sav.sk.

One election term has ended. Even though its final year was undoubtedly challenging due to the ongoing global pandemic, ESS managed to maintain its professional status as a society of ethnologists largely thanks to the efforts of chairperson Dr. Bocánová, the treasurer Dr. Juraj Janto, the members of the committee, the editorial board of *Etnologické rozpravy* led by Associate Professor Tatiana Bužeková, and all active ESS members, whose work helped maintain the status and the strong position of ethnology in society. We wish the new committee a lot of enthusiasm, inspiring ideas and opportunities, and active members who are ready to put these ideas into practice.

Zdena Krišková

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE CZECH
ETHNOLOGICAL SOCIETY
AND THE CONFERENCE ENTITLED
ETHNOLOGY BETWEEN SCIENCE AND POLITICS:
AB/USE OF ETHNOLOGICAL SCIENCES
FROM THE 19TH CENTURY TO THE PRESENT**

The year 2020 was marked by the COVID-19 pandemic and a significant number of events had to be cancelled for health and epidemiological reasons. The pandemic also affected the general assembly of the Czech Ethnological Society (CES) and the conference organised every three years by the organisation of Czech ethnologists. The general assembly and the conference were held from 15 to 17 September 2020 at the Mining Museum Příbram under strict sanitary measures.

General assemblies of The Czech Ethnological Society are held every three years to evaluate the society's activities, elect the incoming main committee, and present a vision for the upcoming three-year period. This was also the case in Příbram, where the CES chairperson Jana Nosková gave a report on the society's activities from 2017 to 2020. The society has approximately 200 members and publishes its own ethnographic journal called *Národopisný věstník* [Ethnographic Bulletin]. It is published twice a year and in 2018 it achieved major success, as it was included in the prestigious world bibliographic database SCOPUS. In addition to the journal, the society maintains a bibliographic database of ethnological articles published in regional journals, which currently has over 15,000 entries. The society also continued to popularise and reward professional activities in the field of ethnology, for instance, by regularly organising a poll about the most significant achievement in the field for the previous calendar year in the following categories: publication; exhibition, exposition; project, event, conference. Moreover, it supported the work of young researchers in the field of ethnology by organising the Student Award of the Czech

Ethnological Society in the bachelor and master thesis categories. Since 2017, university students in the field of ethnology have also received financial support from Dr Alena Plessingerová's and Dr Josef Vařeka's foundation to carry out field research in the Czech Republic. The CES also helped develop cooperation with its regional correspondents and conducted interview surveys on national consciousness and contemporary festivals and photographs capturing the period of socialism. In 2017 – 2020, the international cooperation of the CES consisted mainly in its cooperation with UNESCO. In 2016, the CES was elected a member of the Evaluation Body of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of UNESCO for a term of four years. In these roles, the members of the CES evaluated applications for the Intangible Cultural Heritage List and their work was highly appreciated by UNESCO. Cooperation with the Ethnographic Society of Slovakia has also developed further, and since 2018 members of both societies meet regularly once a year in autumn at the top of the Velká Javorina mountain. As part of its professional activities, the CES has organised or helped organise various conferences and workshops. It is important to highlight the activities of two commissions that are particularly active at the CES, namely the Commission for Vernacular Architecture, Settlements, and Habitation and the Commission for Folk Customs. A total of seven conferences and workshops were organised in the three-year period, including in cooperation with major museums.

The aforementioned activities could not have been carried out without the financial support from grant projects for which the CES actively applies each year to the Ministry of Culture and the Council of Scientific Societies, or without the funding granted for work that had been carried out for UNESCO. At the same time, the active work done by the members of the main committee, which is voluntary and often time-consuming, contributes to the successful implementation of activities. At the 2020 general assembly, new tasks have been assigned for the period of the following three years, such as the continuation of the digitisation process and ensuring the data collected and created as part of the digitisation process and the bibliographic database of ethnographic articles is accessible, as well as the maintenance of the ethnographic journal *Národopisný věstník* in the SCOPUS database, and the improvement of the engagement of the CES members (for instance, by voting in the poll). In the financial agenda, the tasks include securing the funding for the activities of the CES in the following three years, during which the CES will not take part in UNESCO's Evaluation Body, thus losing one significant source of income. These tasks will be handled by the incoming main committee and the incoming Chairperson elected at the general assembly in Příbram. Jiří Woitsch from the Institute of Ethnology of the Czech Academy of Sciences (CAS), a public research institution in the Czech Republic, was appointed the new Chairperson of the CES for the period from 2020 to 2023.

As noted above, the activities carried out by the CES in 2020 were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Apart from the general assembly, the only other event that took place was the conference “Ethnology between Science and Politics: Ab/use of Ethnological Sciences from the 19th Century to the Present”, which was organised by the CES in cooperation with the Mining Museum in Příbram’s Březové Hory, the Institute of Ethnology of the Czech Academy of Sciences, and the National Institute of Folk Culture in Strážnice, in Příbram. The conference was partly held online, with several speakers giving their presentations from their homes.

The conference was based on the assumption that ethnology (sociocultural anthropology, folklore studies) as an academic science has been closely connected to the historical and political development of society and to various ideological currents since its beginnings, whether it was enlightened patriotism, romantic “discovery of the people”, or nationalism. Therefore, the relationship to the political ideologies of the time period – from the idea of Czechoslovakism through the transformations of ethnological theories in the period of national socialism and communism – forms part of the history of the field. In addition, the knowledge acquired during ethnological research has always been used in the applied field. The main topics of the Příbram conference revolved around the use, application, and abuse of the results of ethnological research in a broader historical and social context and vice versa on the transformation of ethnological research as a result of the changes in ideological and authoritarian regimes and discourses from the nineteenth century up to the present.

Two scholars who have long been involved in the research on history of Czech and Slovak ethnology have been asked to open the conference with their presentations. Gabriela Kiliánová (Institute of Ethnology and Social Anthropology, SAS, Bratislava) raised the issue of research carried out by German researchers in Slovakia during the Second World War. She drew attention to the activities of Hertha Wolf-Beraneck, who worked at the *Institut für Heimatforschung* (Institute for Homeland Research) in Kežmarok, the ideological background of her research, the relationship with German and Slovak colleagues, and the issue of gender. The second presentation was given by Jiří Woitsch (Institute of Ethnology of the CAS, Prague), focusing on Czech ethnographers (social anthropologists) who conducted research in the 1960s primarily in Africa and Latin America. Although their research is currently highly praised for the application of “Western” anthropological approaches in Czech ethnology, it turns out that Czech researchers often carried out non-scientific roles in the fields they studied, when they became involved in power struggles in post-colonial countries.

After the introductory presentations, the conference was divided into individual thematic sections that were arranged in chronological order. The first one was devoted to the interwar period in Czechoslovakia and research pro-

moting the idea of Czechoslovakism or Slavism. Filip Herza (Institute of Ethnology of the CAS, Prague) gave a lecture on the research carried out by Czech academic scientists in Carpathian Ruthenia. In his presentation, he used the theory of postcolonialism and showed how the gathering of knowledge by Czech scientists was also an instrument of power. Klára Woitschová (National Museum, Prague) provided an overview of the development of the Ethnographic Department of the National Museum from the foundation of Czechoslovakia to the early 1950s. She used selected figures (for example, the activities of Drahomíra Stránská) and events (for instance, the relocation of the wooden church from the village of Medvedovce in Carpathian Ruthenia to Prague) to illustrate the dependence of the museum's activities on political events, and regime and ideological changes. Lydia Petráňová (Institute of Ethnology of the CAS, Prague) used the example of the awarding of honorary doctorates at Charles University from the second half of the 19th century to the present day to highlight a similar practice. The scientific activity carried out by those awarded was not always the main criterion for the award of this academic rank, as both academic policies and political interests played a role there.

The following thematic section dealt with the relationship between ethnology and the Nazi regime. Petr Lozoviuk (University of West Bohemia, Pilsen) examined the boom in research carried out by German scholars working at three institutions (including Charles University) in Bohemia during the Second World War. These scholars also conducted research on the Slavic/Czech population. Lozoviuk has shown that some of their conclusions claiming that Czechs and Germans were culturally similar did not correspond with Reinhard Heydrich's views and his vision of "solving the Czech issue". Blanka Soukupová (Charles University, Prague) focused on Czech "ethnographic" celebrations and exhibitions during the Second World War and the political situation they were set in, as it promoted National Socialist ideology, particularly through the adoration of farmers and the damnation of cities. Dana Motyčková and Kateřina Sedlická (Institute of Ethnology of the CAS, Prague) used archival sources to show how research on vernacular architecture, which was funded primarily by the Ministry of Education and National Enlightenment, was carried out during the Second World War. They also highlighted how this knowledge was applied, for instance, in urban development projects in villages and cities.

The third section was devoted to the period of socialism. Nela Štorková (University of West Bohemia, Pilsen) focused on the discourse analysis of the fundamental works published by Czech ethnographers in the 1950s. Štorková maintains that Marxist-Leninist philosophy was used to evaluate works written by the older generation of ethnographers in negative light, it served as a framework for data analysis, and it opened up new research topics. At the same time, there were certain works that were not influenced by Marxism-Leninism. Oto Polouček (Masaryk University, Brno) also focused on the language of ethnographic publications. He applied the ideas of the Russian-American anthropolo-

gist Alexei Yurchak on language (hypernormalisation) and compared the use of ideological rhetoric in the works of the Slovak ethnologist Božena Filová and the Czech ethnologist Antonín Robek, the most significant representatives of ethnography in the 1970s and 1980s. Nikola Balaš (Charles University, Prague) focused on the same period and elaborated on whether the works of ethnographers from this period may be described as atheoretical, whether they are based on Marxism-Leninism, and whether the nationalist vision of the world typical of ethnographic work from the 19th century and later prevails in these works. The analysis of the material showed that national ideology was the most common framework for the interpretation of the data collected. The thematic block was concluded by Petr Janeček (Charles University, Prague), who discussed folklore studies and the connection between this field and several ideologies. Janeček maintains that folklore studies can be apolitical, but the data these studies provide may be used by various ideologies.

The second-to-last thematic section was devoted to applied ethnology/anthropology. In his dive into its history, Daniel Dědovský (Palacký University, Olomouc) went back the furthest, reflecting on proto-ethnographic works from the Baroque, Enlightenment, and Romantic periods and pointing out their connections with economic or national ideologies and theories. Klára Jurková (Masaryk University, Brno) highlighted the cooperation of ethnologists with experts and craftsmen in the preservation and development of handicraft technologies using the example of blueprinting. Stanislav Brouček (Institute of Ethnology of the CAS, Prague) described the cooperation between ethnologists and representatives of the Czech minority abroad in solving problems related to the migration policy of the Czech Republic since the 1990s to the present, where the expert knowledge of ethnologists is directed towards the government authorities.

Migration was also the central topic of Silvia Letavajová (University of Constantine the Philosopher, Nitra), who opened the last thematic section that was dedicated to the social overlaps of ethnological research. Letavajová focused on the use and abuse of migration processes by political actors during the political unrest in Slovakia after 2015. Eva Šipőczová (Institute of Ethnology of the CAS, Brno) focused on the possibilities and limitations of folklore research on political anecdotes and inscriptions on banners carried during protests in the Czech Republic and Slovakia in 2018 and 2019. The conference was concluded by Kristína Jamrichová (Masaryk University, Brno) and her presentation on the topic of ethnological research in a diagnostic centre (educational facility) for youth. She regarded this institution as a product of the doctrine of neoliberalism, tracing its legitimation inwards and outwards while noting her positionality in research.

The conference successfully achieved what it had set out to do. The presentations critically examined the links between ethnology and politics or the

application of different ideologies, both in planning field research and in analysing and publishing empirical data, from a historical perspective and by using Czech-Slovak material. At the same time, the participants' contributions dealt with the applied aspects of ethnology and critically examined the possibilities of ethnologists' community engagement. The lively discussion sparked by some of the contributions proved that coming to terms with the role of ethnology in various regimes and historical periods is not at all devoid of emotion. One can only regret that as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was not possible to hold a panel discussion to examine ethnological research and the activities of ethnologists during Socialism, which would have been attended by several contemporary witnesses of that time period. In conclusion, it can be stated that coming to terms with the ab/use of ethnology is by no means over. Those interested in the subject matter would be happy to hear that several contributions will be published in the ethnographic journal *Národopisný věstník* in 2021.

Jana Nosková

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Dejan Ajdačić

Institute of Classical and Slavonic Studies
Faculty of Languages
University of Gdańsk
Wita Stwosza 51, 80-308 Gdańsk
Poland
E-mail: dejan.ajdacic@ug.edu.pl

Ján Botík

Professor Emeritus
Dunajská Lužná
Slovakia
E-mail: janobotik@gmail.com

Marta Botiková

Department of Ethnology and Museology
Faculty of Arts
Comenius University in Bratislava
Gondova 2, 811 02 Bratislava
Slovakia
E-mail: marta.botikova@uniba.sk

Tatiana Bužeková

Department of Ethnology and Museology
Faculty of Arts
Comenius University in Bratislava
Gondova 2, 811 02 Bratislava
Slovakia
E-mail: tatiana.buzekova@uniba.sk

Nadia Clemente

Association
Identità e Tutela Val Resia
Via di Mezzo 4, 33010 Resia (Udine)
Italy
E-mail: nadiaclemente268@gmail.com

Magdalena Elchinova

Department of Anthropology
New Bulgarian University
Montevideo 21, 1618 Sofia
Bulgaria
E-mail: melchinova@nbu.bg

Hana Hlôšková

Institute of Ethnology and Social Anthropology
Slovak Academy of Sciences
Klemensova 19, 814 67 Bratislava
Slovakia
E-mail: anna.hloskova@savba.sk

Vera Kapeller

Gols
Austria
E-mail: vera.kapeller@gmail.com

Zdena Krišková

Department of Social and Cultural Studies
Faculty of Arts
Matej Bel University
Tajovského 40, 974 01 Banská Bystrica
Slovakia
E-mail: Zdena.Kriskova@umb.sk

Dominika Lešková

Department of Ethnology and Museology
Faculty of Arts
Comenius University in Bratislava
Gondova 2, 811 02 Bratislava
Slovakia
E-mail: dominika.leskova@uniba.sk

Mirjam Mencej

Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology
Faculty of Arts
University of Ljubljana
Aškerčeva 2, SI-1000 Ljubljana
Slovenia
E-mail: mirjam.mencej@ff.uni-lj.si

Jana Nosková

Department of Memory Studies
Institute of Ethnology
Czech Academy of Sciences
Veveří 97, 602 00 Brno
Czech Republic
E-mail: noskova@eu.cas.cz

Magdaléna Paríková

Bratislava
Slovakia
E-mail: parikovam48@gmail.com

Manca Račič

Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology
Faculty of Arts
University of Ljubljana
Aškerčeva 2, SI-1000 Ljubljana
Slovenia
E-mail: manca.racic@ff.uni-lj.si

Andrej Solár

Museum of Croatian Culture in Slovakia
Slovak National Museum
Istrijská 68, 841 07 Bratislava – Devínska Nová Ves
Slovakia
E-mail: mkchs@snm.sk

Michal Uhrin

Department of Ethnology and Museology
Faculty of Arts
Comenius University in Bratislava
Gondova 2, 811 02 Bratislava
Slovakia
E-mail: michal.uhrin@uniba.sk

Katarína Žeňuchová

Jan Stanislav Institute of Slavistics
Slovak Academy of Sciences
Dúbravská cesta 9, 841 04 Bratislava
Slovakia
E-mail: katarina.zenuchova@savba.sk

LANGUAGE, COMMUNICATION AND SOCIETY

Call for papers

Ethnologia Slovaca et Slavica 44

Generations of ethnologists and anthropologists have been fascinated by the diversity of language forms and their use in various societies. Investigation of language led to understanding that this way of communication is quite distinct from communication within nonhuman species. The study of language has been central to the social sciences and humanities since their beginnings. Many features of language evoked theoretical and methodological discussions which pointed to a complex nature of this phenomenon.

Communication always encompasses various interpretations and signals costlier than words. For human communication it is central to read “between the lines” to understand intentions, not just verbatim meaning. Each speech has its own distinctive features – specific rules of interaction and norms of interpretation. Furthermore, language can be helpful instrument of inclusion as well as exclusion and, therefore, the reproduction of social inequality. In the contemporary globalized world, which is full of intercultural challenges, research on communicative competences, performances, practices and understanding of legal implications of communicated texts is gaining more attention.

The editors of *Ethnologia Slovaca et Slavica* invite analytic, theoretical or synthetic articles, research reports, essays and discussions in the fields of ethnology, social and cultural anthropology and related scholarly disciplines, focused especially (not, however, exclusively) on the following issues:

- Theoretical and methodological challenges in the study of language
- Ethnography of communication
- Language, trust and cooperation
- Language and public service interpreting
- Law, legalese and plain language
- Language and kinship, intergenerational communication
- Language of in-group and out-group, Language, power, discrimination
- Language and religion

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- Language, politics, propaganda
 - Language, care and education
 - Language, services and institutions
 - Language ideologies
 - Language and myths, language and ritual, language in folklore
 - Metaphors and communication
 - Language, humour, laughter
 - Language and silence

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